

SPECIAL INSIGHTS INTO SADHANA

(THE ENTIRE COLLECTION)



From
Early Morning Meditation Talks

BY

H.H. SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA

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Publishers' Note

This special series of eight booklets is being published between September 1996 and September 1997 in honour of the 80th Birthday Anniversary of H.H. Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, the President of the Divine Life Society.

Each booklet contains several of his early morning meditation talks given on special spiritual occasions in the sacred Samadhi Hall of the holy founder of the Divine Life Society and Sivananda Ashram, H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. The series of eight booklets covers the entire year of special occasions and festivals celebrated in the Ashram.

The talks contain penetrating insights into the meaning and purpose of *sadhana* as Swamiji takes advantage of these occasions to point out the fundamentals required for success in the spiritual quest such as devotion to the goal, discrimination, obedience to the Guru, faith in God and oneself, and a divinely lived life.

The spiritual advice and encouragement contained in these booklets will be an inspiration and help to earnest spiritual seekers throughout the world.

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

Preface

The whole year for the Hindu is a continuous observance of some sacred day of worship or other. The year is completely built around a great many days of sacred worship of various expressions of the one non-dual Divine Reality.

Each month is significant for the presence of some important day of divine worship. So, from beginning to end, life becomes God-oriented; it becomes devotion filled. Life becomes based upon worship.

The holiness and sanctity of life and actions of the followers of the Vedic religion is insured by this great wisdom-based approach to life. All the twelve months become a composite period of adoring the Divine Reality around which the entire life of the individual revolves.

-Swami Chidananda

Booklet One

"Ultimately sadhana means victory. Yoga-abhyas means victory. Spiritual life means victory."

-Sri Swami Chidananda



The All-Conquering Power

Radiant Atman! Beloved children of the Divine, assembled together in Gurudev's presence in this Samadhi Hall of His holy Ashram on the banks of Divine Mother Ganga in sacred Uttarakhand! *Sarvam vishnumayam jagat* (The whole world is pervaded by Lord Vishnu); *Sarvam khalvidam brahma* (All this is verily Brahman-these are statements you find in the scriptural utterances of *satya sanatana vaidika dharma* (the true, eternal Vedic *dharma*, religion) that you call Hinduism).

There is a denomination, a *sampradaya* (sect) of Hinduism, a certain philosophical school, which equates everything with a supreme, inexpressible cosmic power. And that cosmic power is envisaged, is regarded, worshipped and adored as the great universal Mother, the cosmic power whom they call Sakti, Para-Sakti. It is the primal power which was before anything else came into being, which alone was. It is *adisakti*, the primal power; *parasakti*, the transcendental power; *mahasakti*, the great imponderable power. Whatever we see in this universe is but a manifestation of That-*sarvam saktimayam jagat* (The whole world is pervaded by the Universal Power).

Everything that we have in the form of any force, strength, power, is Her manifestation within and without. If we have strength in our limbs, it is because of Her presence within us. If we are able to think, the power of thought is Her manifestation within us. If we have the power of reasoning, intellect, it is the manifestation of the Cosmic Mother. If we have the power to feel and to comprehend the feelings of others, then it is the manifestation of Mother. If we have the power to recall long forgotten events from our memory bank and bring them out, that power is an aspect of the cosmic power of the Mother Who dwells within us.

She is everything: physical strength, power to think, power to will, power to reason, logic, power to feel, to remember, power to visualise the past, present and future. It is the power of the Mother that makes the river to flow, wind to blow. Fire to burn, great machines to work. She is the biting power of the

mosquito, the hauling power of the elephant. *Sarvam saktimavam jagat* (The whole world is pervaded by the Universal Power).

A man may have vast wealth but be a miser and never make use of it. If he never invests his wealth he will ever remain a poor man. His wealth will not develop and multiply. He cannot become wealthier and wealthier because he is not making use of what he has been given. He drags on a miserable existence. He does not even want to replace his old clothes. Not that he has no power, but he does not use it. On the other hand, an entrepreneur, a commercial magnate, goes on investing and continuously keeps working and there is no end to his prosperity. He goes on progressing day after day, expands his empire. Why? Because he has put to use what he has. He has utilised, applied in a practical manner in his life, what he possesses.

Similarly, it is not that we do not possess, but if we do not apply, we remain where we are. The secret of success in any field of endeavour is industry and application and, above all, perseverance in this industry and application. You take up something, apply yourself to it, and don't stop until you reach the goal. Keep on, persevere. Continuous effort is the key to ultimate achievement. This is something that both Patanjali Maharshi and Lord Krishna, each in their own way, state very explicitly. Lord Krishna states it in the sixth chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali Maharshi expounds this principle when he deals with the fifth *anga* (limb) of Ashtanga Yoga, namely *dharana* or concentration.

Perseverance means not giving up, but with a calm, serene determination pursuing till the end. And suppose the goal is not attained at the end of that perseverance? That is not at all important, for the one who has thus persevered has succeeded. That person has achieved success. Success is not in getting something. Success lies in not giving up. Success lies in perseverance till the end. That is the greatest achievement in life. Yoga is no exception to it. *Bhakti* is no exception to it. The attempt to control the mind is no exception to it. The attempt to achieve concentration is no exception to it. The attempt to lead a good life is no exception to it. The attempt to control our senses, to attain victory over negative habits and cultivate and establish noble, positive habits is no exception to it. All yield to the mysterious power of persevering effort. It is an all-conquering force. It is an all-conquering force because it is a direct application of Divine Mother's presence in us. Nothing can stand before it. Everything yields to it, provided we persevere with utmost regularity.

In many places in rural India there is no machinery. So if they want to dig a well they use pickaxes and crow-bars. In the beginning only the surface of the earth is disturbed, no impression is made. But they go on digging, digging, digging in the same place and soon there is a large hole getting deeper and deeper. Finally, due to their persevering effort and the application of strength exercised continuously, they have water. It may be at 12 feet, 15 feet, 20 feet or even more. But they got what they were after, even though originally it was not

visible. They had only guessed that it must be there. And so it has nothing but the sheer result of persevering effort applied in one direction, with one objective, that brought about this consummation.

Each human individual, each *jivatma*, has been given the ability to attain anything that he wants and the power for it-physical, mental, moral and intellectual. The only thing is, you should have enthusiasm, you should have aspiration, you should have a desire. Then everything becomes possible, because you have been endowed with this strength which is not an ordinary strength. It is a manifestation of the supreme Cosmic Power.

There is a hymn to the Divine Mother in the Durga Saptasati: *ya devi sarvabhuteshu buddhi-rupena samsthita, namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namo namah*-I bow to that supreme Divine Mother, the Goddess Who resides within me, Who exists within me as the power of the intellect; I bow to Her again and again and again. *Ya devi sarvabhuteshu smriti-rupena samsthita, namastasyai, namastasyai namastasyai namo namah*-I bow to the supreme Goddess, the Cosmic Power Who resides within me as the power of memory; I bow to Her again and again and again. Thus this particular hymn identifies the presence of the Cosmic Power in the individual in his various aspects, physical, psychological, etc.

Therefore, the power is with us. If we are not misers, if we apply or invest it by having a certain keen aspiration, by putting forth effort for an objective, by persevering in that objective with calm determination and keeping up this perseverance with utmost regularity, it yields results. That is the teaching.

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was very positive about this in his guidance to us. He always used to say: "Do not despair, there is nothing impossible for you. Everything is possible if you keep on persevering. Do not yield. Do not give up." And our scriptures abound in certain supreme examples like Bhagiratha, Savitri, Dhruva and others. These illustrations all try to point out to us, by example, what is possible.

You must benefit out of this truth about yourself. Reflect upon it. Know that you have within yourself the power to attain whatever you aspire after, provided you fulfil the conditions of perseverance, regularity in perseverance and a determination to persevere onward till the end. God bless you all!

Sadhana Means Effort

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! All of you are proceeding towards a definite goal. What does this proceeding towards a definite goal mean? What should it mean to you, imply to you? And in what way should it manifest in your thought, word and deed?

What should *sadhana* mean to you? How should this *sadhana* manifest in your life, in your thoughts, words and deeds? If spiritual life is the supreme ideal and if Yoga *sadhana* is engaged in in order to reach the goal, the *lakshya* of Yoga, then what should *sadhana* mean, what should the life of Yoga and *yoga-abhyasa* mean to you, imply to you? For unless you know what *sadhana*, Yoga and *yoga-abhyasa* should mean to you, imply to you, and how they should manifest in your life, how can you engage in true *sadhana* or *yoga-abhyasa*? It cannot be effective.

Do our scriptures throw any light upon this very important and vital question? Yes, they do, not in some hidden, occult sense, some esoteric sense which will have to be expounded by subtle thinkers and great philosophers trying to make meaning out of very subtle, mystical and ambiguous truths uttered in a high-flown way. Rather, directly, plainly, categorically, unambiguously, unmistakably, scriptures do have something to say about this vital question. What is it?

Rama had a goal: He wanted to bring Sita back. Ravana also had a goal: he wanted to keep Sita. Ravana did not want to give Sita to Rama even though people like his brother Vibhishana and even Mandodari, his wife, persuaded, begged, prayed and advised him to do so. And so, Ravana, in order to achieve his goal, fought in as many ways as it is possible to fight. And Rama, to attain His goal, also engaged himself in the battle-He fought. They did not lie down in an easy chair and ask someone else to do something for them. They went themselves. They asked the help of people. They consulted others. They gathered armies. They did all that was necessary to do, at least within the limits of their knowledge. To use an English expression: they left no stone unturned.

What to say of superior human beings like Prince Rama, a scion of the royal family, even animals-monkeys and bears-also tried their best to do everything. When they were helpless, they consulted each other! "What should we do now?" They sat down, put their heads together, thought about it and tried to see what they could do. So they also exercised their intelligence. They did not sit back.

When they had done all that they could, their very best, and could not go further, even then they did not give up. They further enquired, thought and reflected. Why? Because of their sincerity. They wanted to do it-really, truly, genuinely, authentically-and, therefore, they did everything they could. They exercised their strength and they fought. They did not simply allow the opposition to overcome them, saying, "What to do? Fate." No! If there is opposition they said, "we have to overcome. We must use our strength. We must be active. We must be dynamic. We must do something about it." Doing is *sadhana*. Be up and doing.

For the past four days, you have been hearing the Devi Mahatmyam being read. Devi is a great Being, *parabrahman sakti*. By simply thinking, by *humkara*, She had the power to destroy all Her enemies. She could do that; but no, She used all the weapons, not one weapon, but many kinds of weapons. And She also fought. That means She was vigorously active in trying to overcome the opposition and reach the goal.

When the *devas* fought and failed, they took recourse to a higher power. They went and prayed. "Pease help us. We are not able. Come to our aid. Fight on our behalf."

***"Sarva-mangala-mangalye sive sarvartha-sadhike,
Saranye tryambake gauri narayani namostute.
Srishti-sthiti-vinasanam saktibhute sanatani,
Gunasraye gunamayi narayani namostute.
Saranagatadinarta paritrana parayane,
Sarvasyartihare devi narayani namostute."***

("Salutation be to You O Narayani, O You Who are the good of all good, O auspicious Devi, Who accomplish every object, the giver of refuge, O three-eyed Gauri!

Salutation be to You, O Narayani, You Who have the power of creation, sustenance and destruction and are eternal. You are the substratum and embodiment of the three *gunas*.

"Salutation be to You, O Narayani, O You Who are intent on saving the dejected and distressed that take refuge under You. O You, Devi Who remove the sufferings of all !")

Within these three slokas they took shelter. She is the shelter-*saranagata dinarta paritrana parayani*. She helps those who take recourse to Her. If you do not take recourse, She is where She is, She is what She is, and you remain where you are. It is only when you take recourse, She says; "OK, you are asking Me, I will do what you ask. I will come to your rescue." So, even there activity is necessary. You must actively go and seek the aid of the Divine, within and without, in all Its manifestations.

It is this that constitutes *sadhana*, this active effort to overcome obstructions, to progress along the path and reach the Goal. *Yoga-abhyasa* means active effort to obtain the *lakshya*, to reach the Goal. *Sadhana* means active effort to obtain that which is possible of being obtained through effort. So, it means continuous effort in the right direction. And it means a willingness to keep up this continuous effort. It means, not a negative unproductive attitude of approach, but a positive, ever-willing attitude of engaging in active effort.

What will be the form of the active effort? The form will be that which is right and suitable for overcoming that which opposes, that which is suitable for achieving the Goal, that which takes you nearer and nearer in the direction you wish to move. It will be that which is intelligently chosen, which is through and through common sense. You must use common sense. God has given you intelligence. You must apply both your intelligence and common sense and be thus actively engaged in moving towards the Goal.

This active effort is the essence of *sadhana* and it should be throughout. *Sadhana* means active effort. *Yoga-abhyasa* means active effort. It may be mental effort. It may be verbal effort. It may be physical effort. It may be all three combined. It may be a fourth kind of effort which is not covered by mental, physical and verbal effort. But it is all effort.

If you want to do some silly thing such as indulging in some pleasure, how much effort you will do, how much you will weigh the pros and cons to discover how somehow or other you may be able to satisfy your senses and please your mind. All night and day you engage in doing it. The same thing should be applied in the direction of Yoga.

But, if on the contrary you are only engaged in actively seeking sense pleasures, in satisfying yourself, in hunting for selfish fulfilment, then active effort will be present, but it will be in the wrong direction. It will not produce any concentration or ecstasy or higher consciousness. It will not, because it is being done in a wrong direction.

So, the effort must be in the right direction. And it should not be accompanied by self-sabotage. It should not be accompanied by working against yourself in another direction. If in one area you are vigorously working for yourself in the right direction but in another area you go on working in the opposite direction, then naturally your right effort will be unproductive, because you are undoing what you are trying to do.

Therefore, active effort should be accompanied by earnestness and sincerity. It should be accompanied by common sense and ordinary intelligence—not extraordinary intelligence which is not in the possession of all people. We take the normal human being; a *sadhaka* is a normal person. And from where one is one starts, for that is one's equipment at that point in time. Therefore, with common sense, enquiry and reflection and with whatever intelligence God has endowed you with, intelligently make active effort to overcome that which stands in the path, within and without, and move steadily towards the Goal.

This is what all scriptures show. Rama exercised this active effort, and He also fought a battle. Devi also keeps on fighting battle after battle. The Mahabharata shows the same thing, the exercise of active effort. You have to overcome that which is contrary to your ideal and goal. And you must keep on,

keep on and not get disheartened, not get frustrated. There were times when even Lord Rama got a little perturbed because everything He used against Ravana proved of no avail. Then a sage comes and tells Him: "No, no, no, this is not the way. Come along, buck up!" Then he gives Him a little help. That means that the emphasis is always upon the positive.

Gurudev was very fond of the Latin expression *nil desperandum*. Many times he used to say, "Do not despair." For where there is despair, there is no hope. Interestingly enough, the three great cardinal virtues within the Christian theological context are faith, hope and charity. Much emphasis is put upon hope and you know what the reason is. Hope is necessary, because the spiritual life, *sadhana* and *Yoga-abhyasa* are not easy. It is not as if you can just put a coin in a slot-machine and out comes a fruit. It is not like that. There is no assurance of quick results and fruits. Ultimate fruits are what we are aiming at, not immediate successes. If we keep on our effort, then the ultimate fruit is assured.

This is the truth that scriptures try to draw our attention to in respect to our spiritual life. This is what scriptures, in their very clear and unmistakable way, say. Not in any subtle, hidden, occult and esoteric way, but plainly, calling a spade a spade. They put before us this plain fact, the plain truth: We have to keep on making effort. *Sadhana*, *Yoga-abhyasa*, spiritual life, mean using common sense, intelligence and keeping up effort to reach the goal which we have set for ourselves. Every scripture we touch has this common universal message even though they may vary in certain details. The basic central message is plain for anyone to see.

If we can see this basic, central message, accept it, apply it, and thus engage in *sadhana* with common sense and intelligence, then victory will be ours, because it heads towards victory.

In all the big North Indian cities, these ten days will end in the day of victory. Rama becomes the victor; His efforts give Him fruit. Similarly, after nine days of worship, the tenth day is celebrated as the great victory of the Divine Mother over all that opposes Her. *Vijaya*, the name itself is significant. People greet each other; they exchange greeting cards. Why? It is rejoicing at the victory. The great experience of victory is the assured culmination. You are meant for it.

Sadhana therefore means victory. *Yoga-abhyasa* means victory ultimately. Spiritual life means victory ultimately. God bless you with such a victory! May the Divine Mother give you the intelligence, the common sense and the effort to attain this victory!

The Right Moment To Begin Anew

Homage unto the Supreme Reality, the source, the origin, the support, the substratum, the goal and the fulfilment, the alpha and the omega, the beginning, the middle and the end, the consummation, of all beings, of all existence, Who is the one and only reality worth striving for! Homage unto that Being in Whom you all live, in Whom you all move, in Whom you all have your being totally, your physical being, your mental and intellectual being and your real, innermost spiritual being.

Totally and literally you exist in God, Who exists everywhere and Who exists ever and ever more There can be no other possibility than that we all exist in that Supreme Being, for He is forever and He is everywhere-here, now and always-for He is the great Reality. He is infinite in space, eternal in time and beyond time. Therefore, there is no other possibility but that we exist in Him, we live in Him, we move in Him, we have our being in Him. He is our all-in-all within and without.

The recognition of this fact is the beginning of spiritual life. The experiencing of this fact is the end of spiritual life. And the endeavour to constantly grow into an ever-progressive awareness of this fact is the very essence of spiritual life. Ultimately, it is the awareness of this fact that is the purpose of all spiritual practices, whether it be *japa* or prayer or contemplation or study or fellowship.

When one begins to recognise this fact, this truth of ones being, one's spiritual awakening commences. When one begins to strive and endeavour to grow in the awareness of this fact, one's spiritual life becomes active and progresses. When one experiences this and becomes established in this experience, then one's spiritual life culminates.

Brahma satyam jaganmithya (God alone is real, the world is unreal) is the beginning of spiritual life. *Brahma-abhyasa* (practice), *brahma chintan* (reflection), is the essence of spiritual life. *Sarvam khalvidam brahma* (All this is verily Brahman) is the ultimate culmination of spiritual life.

There is no spiritual life unless a soul suddenly recognises that everything that is seen, heard, tasted, smelt, touched, thought about or perceived does not constitute the Reality. For everything changes, passes and vanishes. The recognition that there is something beyond, something behind, the unchanging behind the everchangeable, begins one's quest after knowing more about It, one's quest after understanding more about It. So one seeks, one questions, one begins to investigate.

Loving adorations to the spiritual Presence of our Holy Master, who has created a vast body of awakening, illuminating spiritual literature, practical

spiritual literature, proclaiming this fact, compelling us to recognise this great truth, inducing us and inspiring us to endeavour to become aware of this truth and ultimately helping us, illumining us, and bestowing, upon us this great experience that we may become forever blessed. All this and more he is doing for the present global human society, working in their midst in the form of his inspiring and illuminating wisdom teachings. He is present, he is active, he is dynamically working in the form of his wisdom teachings.

The ancient illumined seers and sages exist, powerfully exist, and forcefully call upon us to awake, arise and become illumined. They work within us as the Upanishadic teachings, as the wisdom of the Upanishads. That is why they are immortal. As names and forms they have become ancient. As forms they have vanished. But as a spiritual light, as a spiritual force, as an awakening power, they very much dwell amongst us, they very much work amongst us and they are available to each and every sincere seeking soul wishing to draw inspiration, to enter the path and to proceed towards the Goal. This is the truth. They are Immortal, they are timeless. Therefore, they are sometimes called *nitya siddhas*, the eternal spiritual masters of mankind.

And today, being the first day after the Vijaya Dasami, a day of great commencements, a day of new beginnings, a day of entering with greater vigour into the life spiritual, a day to impart a fresh impetus to our questing and striving and *sadhana*, is indeed the right moment for each one of you to strive to enter deeper into these truths about the spiritual life. Because until and unless we rid ourselves of the error that what is visible is the real, is the truth, and become awakened to the fact that what is unseen is the great reality, that what is invisible is more the fact that what is visible, until and unless this new awareness is created and becomes the basis of our day-to-day living, our spiritual life will still lack authenticity, our spiritual life will still fall short of being the genuine thing.

When the outer is felt to be the solid reality, the important thing, then the inner becomes something remote, more a concept than a fact. This is undesirable. This is not as it should be. Therefore one needs to correct one's perspective and change one's inner awareness, begin to live with a new consciousness and have a right sense of values. And this is the right time.

One well-seasoned and veteran spiritual person has decided to commence as from today a 40 days' retreat of relative seclusion, silence, intense contemplation and inner spiritual *sadhana*. Now, when a person who has been into spiritual life and practice for perhaps nearly 50 years, knows that this is an auspicious point in time to make a good resolution, to make a good commencement, and enters into a practical course of a spiritual *sadhana*, what about lesser people, raw people, relatively newer into the spiritual life? How much more should be their eagerness to make use of each and every opportunity that presents itself to bring about a fresh impetus into their spiritual life, to go ahead with greater vigour, to enter into a greater depth of *sadhana*! Their need is

greater. There is no real need to pour water into a full pot, but all empty or half full vessel needs to be filled.

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji fasted on *ekadasi* all his life until the year 1960. It was only in the year 1960 that a very eminent physician from New Delhi, who was also the personal physician of the President of India, insisted that Gurudev stop this habit of fasting because of his diabetes. So up until the last few years of his life, Gurudev maintained this discipline. When such great souls, for some reason known to themselves, adhere to such disciplines, it is an indication, a pointer to us. We should emulate them and try to learn from them how very necessary it is for us to be serious, to be earnest and to be practical in our spiritual life.

On this auspicious day, may the grace of the Divine and the choicest benedictions and blessings of beloved and worshipful Holy Master enable us to understand the essence of spiritual life and grant us the inner spiritual power to forge ahead towards the Goal Supreme. May we be blessed with all success in this great life of ascending from unrealities into the Reality, from darkness into Light, from death and mortality into immortality and everlasting life! God bless you all!

Live In The Light

Homage unto Thee, Thou, Universal Presence Divine, Thou Who art the origin and source of all existence, the substratum and support of all existence and the ultimate fulfilment and goal of all existence. To Thee, worshipful homage of this servant of the Master in the Master's divine spiritual presence in the sacred Samadhi Shrine of his holy Ashram.

Loving adorations to Thee, O Gurudev, thou who art the light of our lives. Thou hast shown us light in the darkness of our spiritual self-forgetfulness, in the darkness of our ignorance of our divine mission in life, and thou hast illumined our life with a light of the Divine Life ideal of living, being and doing.

Radiant Atman! Beloved *sadhakas* and devotees of the Lord assembled here! Let us offer our heart's gratitude to the Divine, the Cosmic Being, Who has conferred upon us the rare and blessed status of being thinking, feeling and reasoning human beings upon this planet earth. For this great blessedness, let us offer our gratitude by applying this great gift in the highest, noblest and most sublime manner until the last breath is in the body.

And let us offer our heart's gratitude to Gurudev who is to us the ideal, both for our own subjective inwardness of conduct, character, thinking and feeling as well as for our attainment, that of a *jivanmukta*, a *jnani*, a *parama bhakta*, a Yogi established in the inner Self, inner consciousness of Self-awareness, and a *karma yogi par excellence*, a being filled with universal love,

compassion, kindness and dynamic goodness. He has thus placed himself before us as a manifold ideal for our living, both in our subjective inwardness as well as our endeavour upon the outer field of our day-to-day living.

Children of Light! The sacred invocation that has come down to us from times immemorial is *tamaso ma jyotir gamaya*-From darkness enable us to ascend into the Light. That we should not enter into darkness but should move towards the Light is made abundantly clear by the Isopanishad. We should ever face the Light. We should live in the Light, because we are of the Light.

If we do not make Light our supreme destiny, if we do not make ourselves votaries of that Light of lights beyond all darkness, then we run the danger of going from darkness to greater darkness-*andham tamah pravisanti ye avidyam upasate* (They who worship *avidya* alone fall into blinding darkness). Those who direct their attention to that which is ephemeral, fleeting, that which is not the Eternal Reality, they enter into blinding darkness. For, if we make all our life a pursuit of the lesser knowledge, which only increases vanity and confirms the error of outer appearances being the reality, then we enter into deeper darkness.

Worshipping either *avidya* or *apara vidya* (lesser knowledge) is fraught with danger. Both lead from darkness to denser darkness. Therefore to ever strive for *para vidya*, the greater knowledge, the supreme knowledge that illumines, enlightens and liberates-that should be our life. We must ever move towards that great Light of lights that is beyond all darkness, attaining the region of which one does not return to this realm of pain and death and rebirth. *Yadgatva na nivartante taddhama paramam mama* (Going where they do not return-that is My supreme abode).

That should be well pondered. That should be reflected upon. That should be meditated upon, and that should be attained. Hence it is that we pray that our intellects may be illumined-to bring light into the darkness of *avidya* that prevails within. It is perhaps to remind us every day that our life should always be a continuous striving to bring light into the darkness.

And it was to perhaps remind us to never forget this great task, to ever keep before us this great ideal, that our wise ancestors have conceived the festival of lights, Dipavali, where the darkness of the new moon night, *amavasya*, is illumined by millions and millions of bright twinkling lights from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari where the whole of India would be one great light if you were to observe it from a satellite. It is to ever remind us that we should make our life a constant process of moving from darkness into light, or making ourselves a living light of the Divine.

If He is *paramjyotih svarupa paramatma* (having the nature of Supreme Light and is the Supreme Self) and we are His *amsas*, as the Lord Himself states in the Gita, then we are also *paramjyotis* in a lesser way. We are the

transcendental light in our essential nature. Our true identity is light and not darkness. Our true identity is effulgence and not gloom. Our true identity is radiance.

Therefore, let us arouse within ourselves the light of this consciousness and be as a lamp unto darkness. That was the parting admonition of the great enlightened sage, Buddha: "Be, O Bhikhus, each one of you as a light unto yourselves and as a lamp unto the feet of others."

We reiterate that admonition at this moment. We reinvoke a special awareness of the invocation: *tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*. Let us strive diligently by all the powers at our disposal to ever make ourselves a centre of radiant, divine effulgence, a centre of shining character and sublime good conduct, a centre of awakened spirituality and a dynamic manifestation of that awakened spirituality in the form of a divinely lived life. For that is the great need of this benighted world of ours, more than half of which has rejected God, rejected the scriptures as superstition and rejected this quest of the human spirit towards the Supreme Light. It has instead taken to hedonism-eat, drink and be merry, have a good time, satisfy the senses and fulfil desires.

That is the great darkness-a total misconception regarding the very fundamental purpose and meaning of life on earth, and, therefore, a headlong plunge into the wrong direction. And the deplorable results, the widespread ignorance and confusion brought about by this blind pursuit of pleasure is everywhere to be seen in the human world upon this planet earth today.

Will you not be lights in this darkness that is spreading over the human world? Will you not make use of the supreme privilege of *mahapurusha samsrayah* (protecting care of a perfected sage) that God has blessed you with and be each one of you a shining light, and strive humbly and simply to be a lamp unto the feet of others? Awaken the light within and let it radiate through your every thought, word and action. And thus make this life a purposeful and a glorious ascent into the fullness of light where one becomes an enlightened being, an illumined being, shining with the light of spiritual consciousness, divine consciousness.

That is the goal. That is to be striven after. That is your great privilege and good fortune to be able to strive towards that attainment. That is your great blessedness. Avail of this privilege. Avail of this golden opportunity. Avail of this blessedness. Avail of this supreme good fortune. Turn away from darkness and move towards the Light.

Make your life a mass of divine radiance. *Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*. Make of yourself a radiant light. Be a light unto yourself and a lamp unto the feet of others. Fill your life with the effulgence of the divine quality that is your birthright. That is the central thrust of the message that beloved and worshipful Holy

Master, Gurudev, has left for us-for our *being* and *doing* and *living*. God bless you!

The Call Of Shanmukha

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! Members of the spiritual family of beloved and worshipful Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, gathered in his spiritual presence this early morning! This morning you have contemplated the Eternal, you have contemplated the Divine, in chanting His Divine Name, in silent inner prayer, through *kirtan* and meditation. You have contemplated that which is, that which ever was and ever shall be-beginningless, endless, infinite and eternal. May the grace of that supreme Divine Reality shower upon you!

We have entered the second day of the auspicious six-day worship of Lord Muruga or Saravanabhava, Karttikeya, Subrahmanya, Shanmukha. Shanmukha means one who is six-faced. Etymologically and metaphysically He is regarded as having six faces. *Shad* means six, *mukha* means face, and when these two coalesce, according to grammatical rules, they become Shanmukha, the six-faced.

Esoterically we may regard "six-faced" as being spelt six-phased. He has six phases or six aspects in which He manifests Himself. All of them represent grace. One represents protection. Another represents benediction. A third represents encouragement: "Do not fear when I am here. Why do you fear?" Others represent auspiciousness, benign compassion and the light of wisdom. Each one of these six facets of Shanmukha manifests, reflects and radiates a certain sublime quality of the Supreme Being, a certain sublime quality of the Divine. They are qualities that mean something to us, mean something to the individual soul that is engaged in this life's journey.

The individual soul, when awakened, knows that the end of this journey is not death, that it is spiritual perfection, that it is liberation, that it is the attainment of immortality and that death has no meaning in the light of this fact, this great truth. Immortality is the birthright of each individual soul precisely because it is a part of the Universal Soul, Which is the Eternal Reality, the one and the only eternal, unchanging, ever-present Reality. This experienced truth has established the fact that our being is that which is timeless, beyond time, eternal and that our being is imperishable, indestructible and immortal. There can be no question of any death for the indestructible. There can be no death for the immortal.

The body is mortal, but the light that shines within the body is endless and immortal. The body is born, but the Being within, the Indweller, the *vinasyatsu avinasyantam* (imperishable within the perishable), is *ajah*, unborn. The Being within is *nitya*, eternal, *sasvata*, permanent. It is unborn, eternal and permanent. It is *purana* (ancient), beyond time, beginningless. Ancient means whose

beginning is not known. Therefore, they call It *anadi* (beginningless), *sanatana* (eternal).

By these terms, the dweller within the perishable body has been characterised by the great World Teacher Lord Krishna in chapter two of His Gita wisdom teachings. He is unborn, He is eternal, He is permanent, He is timeless. That is what you are, and death has no meaning for that Being Who is beyond time and Who is birthless. There is death only for that which is born. For the unborn there can be no death. *Jatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh*-death is certain for that which is born, *jatasya*, but for that which is unborn, *ajah*, there can be no question of death. So death holds no meaning for the Immortal Being that you are. And this journey of life has as its destiny the everlasting Life Which is ever there.

The divine destiny of man is once again to regain the full experience of his perfect nature. That this is a possibility has been proven again, and again in each generation, throughout thousands of years. It has been proved again and again by the self-experience of the seers and sages who proclaimed the great declaration "*amritasya putrah* (children of Immortality)." The experience of this great declaration, that we are children of Immortality, has been kept up by the great souls that have graced each generation, keeping alive and bright this great, radiant and effulgent light of spiritual experience, *aparoksha'nubhuti*. These great souls are the wealth of humanity. They are the wealth of the world. They are indeed the eternal benediction, the eternal grace that God constitutes.

And each face of Shanmukha radiantly expresses one aspect of His all-gracious, all-auspicious, all-benign nature, granting fearlessness and strength to His devotees. We invoke, therefore, this all-graceful, all-gracious, all-grace filled manifestation of the Supreme, the *anugraha* of Bhagavan Sankara (the grace of Lord Siva) which was bestowed upon the celestial beings to lead them to victory in their confrontation and conflict with the powers of darkness. He says: "Come, I will lead you to victory. Follow Me. Be of My great gathering. I will lead you to victory." This being your divine, everlasting destiny, what is there to fear, what is there to worry about? There is only one thing to be done-to work.

A poet has declared: "Dust thou art and to dust thou returnest was not spoken of the soul." In a very explicit way, this line brings out this great Vedantic truth, the metaphysical truth of the immortality of the real Being within, the spirit of man. Therefore, the poet says that with hope and courage work on: "Heart within and God overhead." Be sure, the great Presence will grant you victory in this task. Therefore, "Heart within"-be of brave heart. Be courageous. Be heroic in this struggle towards your coveted destiny. Do not miss it. Do not be foolish. Do not be one who sits on the wayside and weeps just because one has fallen.

The Upanishads say: "What if you have fallen? Get up!" They say: "*uttishthata, uttishthata* (arise, arise)!" That too is the call of Subrahmanya. That

is the call of Shanmukha. "Why are you running away cowardly, scattering yourself in confusion? O, ye celestials, come, rally around! Come, come, follow Me! I shall take you to victory." And then they did rally around. They said: "You are *deva senapati* (commander of the celestial forces). You are our leader. You are our commander. Our forces are now gathered together. Even though routed, because of Your call we now have not lost heart. We rally around and we shall follow you." Thus He leads them to victory.

That is the entire episode of Skanda Shashthi and the worship of Lord Karttikeya, Shanmukha, Skanda, Subrahmanya. Just as nine days were set apart for the worship of the Divine as the great Cosmic Power, as the great Mother, Bhagavati, Devi, Durga, even so, six days are set apart for that same power manifest as the commanding leader of the celestial forces. He is the divine commander. He dwells within you as the power of determination. He dwells within you as the power of resolute thought. He dwells within you as the power of concentration upon the task you are undertaking. He dwells within you as the power of dedication to the ideal that you have chosen. He dwells within you as endless hope and courage. These are all the *daivi sampada*. He dwells within you as all that represents the divine within you, the divine that you are.

To invoke Him, therefore, is to answer the call "*uttishthata!* Stand up! Arise! *jagrata!* Be ever awake and alert! Do not again lapse into slumber! *Uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise become enlightened)."

That is the spirit of Skanda Shashthi. That is the call of the Upanishads. That is your heritage. Courage is your birthright, not fear. Hope is your birthright, not despair. Resolution is your birthright, not vacillation or weakness.

Thus, we offer our homage to the commander of the celestial forces, that great Being Who dwells within you as all that is positive, creative, all that is divine, which ensures success in your idealism and life spiritual. God bless you!

Booklet Two

"We must consistently awaken ourselves every day, every moment, every step. A thousand times we will go back into slumber; a thousand times we will have to slap ourselves into wakefulness. Then alone something can be achieved. This is the call of the Bhagavadgita, the Avadhuta Gita and the Master Jesus. This is the central call and teachings of Gurudev Swami Sivananda."

-Sri Swami Chidananda



The Gita Yoga

Worshipful homage unto the Divine Presence, He who is manifest as all that exists, who is infinite, having innumerable names and forms for our constant edification, for our constant uplift and reminder of His all-pervading omnipresence. The perception of this omnipresence is real sight; not to perceive this omnipresence is true lack of sight. It is a vision that goes beyond the visible and perceives the invisible.

That is the spiritual vision that the Srimad Bhagavad Gita wants us to receive from its wisdom teachings, to adopt for our view of all things, and to keep it as a basis for our approach to all things this inner vision of penetrating beyond the visible and perceiving the invisible. I am the hidden essence of all things. I am the Eternal hidden within the non-eternal.

Man's vision has two defects. Man's vision is directed upon names and forms, and he fails to perceive that which the names and forms hide. His vision is always directed outward and, therefore, he fails to perceive that which is inside, that which is more immediate, nearer.

Turn the gaze within. Thus admonishes the Gita wisdom teachings in the sixth chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Your vision is outside, O Man, therefore you do not perceive Me, who am shining in the chambers of your heart. Turn the gaze within. Then you will become instantly aware of Me. Thus the Lord says.

And, likewise, in so many words, Yamadharmaraja tells the boy seeker, aspirant, *jijnasu* and *mumukshu*, Nachiketas, that you must have *avritta-*

chakshuh (the eyes averted from sensual objects). You should have a desire to see that which is inside, not that which is outside. Then you will attain immortality.

The Gita has many verses in it that are verbatim repetitions of the verses of the Kathopanishad. Again and again, they both speak of discipline, of turning the gaze within, controlling the senses and desiring to see that which is within *avritta-chakshush pratyag-atmanam aikshat* (with eyes averted from sensual objects, he sees the Atman within). He desires to have that which shines within, not that which is without, for that which shines within is a light greater than all lights put together. It is the Light of lights beyond all darkness. It is that supreme Light which is more effulgent and brighter than any light that we know the sun, moon, stars, fire, lightning. *Na tatra suryo bhanti na chandra-tarakam nema vidyuto bhanti kuto'yam agnih. Tameva bhantam anubhati sarvam tasya bhasa sarvamidam vibhati* (The sun does not shine there, nor do the moon and the stars, nor do lightnings shine and much less this fire. When He shines, everything shines after Him; by His light, all these shine).

It indwells your heart. Therefore, turn the gaze within. That is the light of the Divine. So that is the most important place for you to turn your attention to your spiritual heart within. *Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese 'rjuna tishthati* (God dwells in the heart of all beings, O Arjuna). It is the region of the inner spiritual heart which is the most important place in the whole universe. We have forgotten it because our gaze is on diverse things.

Therefore, if you want to turn the gaze away from diverse things, to turn it within and become aware of the radiance, the region of your spiritual heart, then you must practise sitting quiet, alone, where there are no things. That is why spiritual aspirants will sit in a corner and face the wall. Then they see nothing except what they want to see, perhaps either the form of their *ishta* or the symbol of OM.

If you sit facing the wall, turning your back to the world, then, at one stroke, many things that distract have no scope to bother you. That is why seekers go to a lonely place where there are not many things. Then it becomes less difficult to perceive or become aware of the One.

Therefore, sit for some time alone, withdraw the vision from outer things and fix it upon the Supreme Reality. This is *abhyasa*, this is practice, this is Gita Yoga.

What about those times when you cannot go and sit in a corner and face the wall, when you have to turn towards the world and see everything, behold everything? No problem. The Gita says that whatever you behold, that also is that which you are seeking. It is that which is the ultimate Reality. But the only thing is: perceive its hidden presence.

All things are indwelt by Me. I pervade all things. Having enveloped this entire universe and all things in it, I am still in My supreme transcendence. I am above all things, but I am very much in all things. I am very much all around you as all things. I alone appear as the many. I am in all things, and I alone exist in the midst of the seeming many. I am the one that exists like a thread running through the beads of a necklace. The beads are many, variegated, different, but the thread is one, the same, continuous, non-different, *akhanda*. I am the *sutratma* (the immanent deity of the totality of the subtle bodies). Know Me as such, see Me as such and become established in My vision.

Samam sarveshu bhuteshu tishthantam paramesvaram vinasyatsv avinasyantam yah pasyati sa pasyati (He sees, who sees the supreme Lord existing equally in all things, the unperishing within the perishing) This is the outer Yoga of the Gita the Yoga of the so-called battle-field that which beholds the One as the common factor in the many.

In a hundred different things made of cotton, the common factor is cotton only. In a hundred different gold ornaments, the common factor is gold and gold only. In a hundred pots and bowls in a potter's shop, the common factor is clay only. Even so, in a million different things, the common factor is the God-principle only, is the Divine only, is the Atman only. *Idam sarvam yadayam atma* (All these are the Self, O dear). Thus the great sage, the towering personality, Yajnavalkya, tells his wife, Maitreyi, Oh ye, listen, know, all this is no other than the great Reality, the Cosmic Being, the Supreme Spirit, *idam sarvam*. All this here is nothing but the Atman.

This is the Gita Yoga. This is the Gita vision. This is the Gita *abhyasa*, practice. This is the one thing needful if you want to constantly keep an unbroken undercurrent of God-remembrance, God-thought, God-perception seeing the One amidst the many, seeing God in and through all things in this world. Thus the meditative state is able to continue even into the active state.

During this period, as we are approaching the Srimad Bhagavad Gita Jayanti, may we exercise these various types of Yogic activities, these processes. May we try to perceive the One within the many, the Divine that indwells Its own creation. Let the Gita, the Gita view, the Gita approach, be constantly meditated upon, reflected upon; and seek to cultivate this Gita vision and Gita *abhyasa*. Make it the basis for your life. Awaken from within you the Gita vision. Make a diligent study of it.

May the God within you grace you to perceive His presence within and to live in His presence, so that the sweet aroma of His presence makes your life fragrant even as the fire burning at the tip of the incense stick draws forth the fragrance hidden inside, wafts it all around and fills the surroundings with fragrance. Let the fire of this knowledge, the ever-burning fire of this awareness, draw forth from within you the fragrance of your divine Reality.

And may this fragrance of divinity drawn forth from within you waft around you and make everything fragrant. Let it manifest itself from within you through your speech, through your thoughts, through your actions, and may you be able, wherever you go, at all times, to take with you this divine fragrance and fill your immediate environment with it. That is divine life! May the indwelling Divine bless you!

Their Fiery Call To Us

Worshipful homage unto the Divine in whose presence we are gathered together here in this sacred Samadhi Hall! Loving adorations to the spiritual presence of Gurudev, who out of his infinite love and motiveless *guru kripa* has brought into being this spiritual centre! It is an ideal set-up for the spiritual unfoldment and progress of the fortunate seeking souls who have come into this earth plane to evolve and attain blessedness by pursuing the divine life, which is a life of higher idealism and a life directed towards the ultimate supreme goal of *aparoksha'nubhuti*, transcendental, direct experience absolute, or *atma-jnana*, Self-realisation, or *bhagavat sakshatkara*, God-experience. May the Lord and the Guru inspire all of you to avail yourselves of this ideal centre with all its requisite facilities and make use of them for attaining supreme blessedness.

As long as the *jivatma* allows the power of *maya* to distract it towards lesser things, to scatter the mind over the many, the outer appearances, then so long does this blessedness remain unutilised. As long as this blessedness is not recognised, then despite this blessedness the *jivatma* continues to be in darkness, continues to go the diverse ways of the *vishayas* (sense-objects) and continues to get caught in its own net of desires. Brought to the gate of freedom and liberation, yet one continues to remain in bondage, not because anything is lacking, but because understanding is lacking, keenness and eagerness are lacking; one is heedless. There is *pramada* (heedlessness) in one's set-up, *alasya* (lethargy) in one's set-up and *vishaya bhoga vritti* (a tendency to enjoy sense-objects) in one's set-up. Thus, endowed with all things that are necessary for progress that are necessary for illumination, liberation and blessedness one continues to remain in a self-created trap of delusion.

Therefore comes the need of daily *sadhana*. Every day there is the need of liberating oneself from this self-created trap, of shaking oneself free from indifference and lethargy, of determining to do battle with oneself. Every day there is the need to answer the call of Lord Krishna: *kshudram hridayadaurbalyam tyakto'ttishtha parantapa* (Cast off this mean weakness of heart. Stand up, O scorcher of foes). *Jahi satrum mahabaho kamarupam durasadam* (Slay thou, O Arjuna, the enemy in the form of desire which is hard to conquer). Every day there is the need to answer the call of the Upanishads: *uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise become enlightened).

This call is still relevant. As long as the *jivatma* continues to remain in a state of self-forgetfulness, of heedlessness, of deliberate indifference to dynamic daily *sadhana*, this call is always relevant. And not only is this call always relevant, it is always present.

Arise and follow Me! More than 1950 years ago this call was sounded. Yet even today the call has relevance because one does not arise and one does not follow the way that is pointed out to him. One still continues to follow the mind, to follow the senses, to follow the old ways of thinking, feeling and non-reasoning, *avichara* and *aviveka*. Therefore, thrice blessed are we and great is our good fortune that God has called us into the path of *nivritti* or renunciation. Thrice blessed are we to have adopted the life spiritual. And thrice blessed are we to have been brought into a setting where everything is present to establish ourselves in God, to be physically engaged in works connected with God and to psychologically become established in a state of constant God-thought, God-awareness.

But there is the necessity to constantly strive to make our entire being God-oriented and God-centred, to constantly strive to direct our heart, mind and soul in the direction of God. That is the great need. The call of the Gita is to ever move in that direction: *Tatah padam tat parimargitavyam, yasmin gata na nivartanti bhuyah* (Then that goal should be sought for, whither having gone none returns). That path has to be pursued, moving along which one does not later come back into this world of pain and death. *Yad gatva na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama* (Having gone thither, they return not; this is My supreme abode).

We have just completed the holy Srimad Bhagavadgita Jayanti. The day after tomorrow we shall worship Lord Dattatreya, Who tells us again and again that this world of vanishing names and forms should not be allowed to delude us into forgetting the true purpose for which we have come here. Dattatreya, through His divine life, through his ideal, one-pointed adherence to the path spiritual, becomes the supreme Guru. And He has much to tell us through the Avadhuta Gita.

Vedanta-sara-sarvasvam jnanam vijnanam eva cha; aham atma nirakarah sava-vyapi svabhavatah (This is the sum and essence of all Vedanta, this is Wisdom and Knowledge, I am the Atman that is formless, all-pervading by nature). *Ahameva'vyayo'nantah suddha-vijnana-vigraha; sukham duhkham na janami katham kasyapi vartate* (I alone am imperishable, infinite, the form of pure Consciousness; I do not know pleasure or pain or how they can affect anyone). *Na manasam karma subhasubham me, na kayikam karma subhasubham me, na vachikam karma subhasubham me* (To me there is no action of mind, good or bad; no action of body good or bad; no action of speech, good or bad). *Janma mrityur na te chittam bandhamokshau subha'subham, katham rodishi re vatsa,*

namarupau na te na me (You have no birth, no death, no mind; you have no bondage, no liberation, nothing good, nothing bad; why do you weep, O child? You have no name and form, nor have I any).

Dattatreya tells us that we are not just human beings merely concerned with this human world. We are Divinity directly related to the Cosmic Divine. The very quintessence of all the Vedas and Vedanta is: I am that Spirit Divine of the nature of pure knowledge, consciousness. I am neither name nor form. I am *nirakara atma*, all-pervading by my very nature. Why? What is my nature? My nature is that I am part of the Cosmic Soul. I am part of the Universal Being. That is my real nature. Therefore, I am divine, I am immortal.

This has to be asserted. This has to be affirmed. This has to be practised. This has to be lived. One must become rooted. This consciousness must become *sahaja* (natural), spontaneous to us. To that end one should strive every day, day after day. Then alone spiritual life is present.

Spiritual life is not just for morning and evening. It is for every step we take, every breath that we inhale and exhale. Spiritual life should saturate our entire being. It is for all the twenty-four hours of the day and night. Then alone it is possible. We may forget all other things, no harm will come to us. But if we forget our spiritual practice, that we are living a spiritual life, then great harm will befall our being. We shall be deprived of the highest welfare, supreme welfare. All other things we can afford to forget, but this we cannot afford to forget.

That is the message of the Gita. That is the message of Dattatreya. That is the message of the Divine Life Society. That is again the message of Divine Master Jesus. Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus did not give a very lax, a very soft, sugar-coated message. He gave a fiery message. He gave an extremely difficult message. He said: I have come with a sword. I have come to break all that is earthly and mundane. Take heed. Do not take Me for granted. This is how the Divine Master Jesus came. That is His real implication. He is a terrible Guru, not the way He has been painted by the imagination of the artists. There was no photography in His times. He came as an awakener, one with a fiery message, urging everyone: Let the dead bury their dead. Sell all that you have and follow Me. Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven.

An uncompromising idealism was the very essence of the fiery message of the Master, the prophet of Nazareth. He showed the way of the divine life, not a soft way but the hard way. He showed the way of self-denial, self-control, of constant meditation. Pray ceaselessly. If you stop, you will drift with the current. You have to constantly keep rowing. You cannot afford to rest on your oars. That was the message of Lord Jesus.

You cannot take things for granted. Do not think that everything will just happen. What will happen will only be your *karmic* pattern. In spiritual life,

nothing just happens. It is a question of doing. It is a question of exertion. It is a question of *purushartha* (effort). It is a question of *abhyasa* (practice). Have nothing just happens. You cannot wait. It is what you *do* that gives results. It is not what others say of you or what you think of yourself that matters in spiritual life, but it is what you *do*.

Others will say about you that which is convenient to them in such a way that they can derive maximum benefit out of you. That is the normal world of human relationships. Therefore, if you build your opinion of yourself on what others say of you, you will be nowhere, you will be ruined. And you also cannot base your opinion of yourself on what you think about yourself. Your thinking is thinking in *maya*. Your thinking is a thinking that is pervaded one hundred per cent by ego. Ego is the only thing that pervades human thought unless one rises above normal thinking by taking the help of the global inheritance of wisdom teachings from the scriptures that we have as our heritage. It is very difficult to think, basing our thoughts upon the admonitions and teachings of the great ones, but that alone is going to help us, not thinking guided by our own self.

Our own self is always misguiding us, always. And even as it is misguiding us, it will keep us thinking that we are very clever, that we are very wonderful. That is the work of the mind. That is the function of the ego. It is the pivot of our delusions, and as long as we cannot overcome it, we are stymied.

That was Lord Krishna's task, to make Arjuna stop imagining that he was thinking very wisely, very knowledgeably, very correctly. As long as Arjuna was thinking like that, he was in a state of confusion. Krishna tried to make him stop thinking in this manner and instead to think based upon wisdom, based upon higher discriminating knowledge. Then alone Arjuna was able to battle with himself, overcome himself by himself and attain a state of firm conviction. Then alone he was able to liberate himself from himself.

Thus, as we move towards the close of the year, bring to bear all your powers of understanding and discrimination, in a spirit of extreme humility, in a spirit of extreme wakefulness and make your life dynamically divine, make your life progressively spiritual. We must constantly awaken ourselves every day, every moment, every step. A thousand times we will go back into slumber; a thousand times we have to slap ourselves into wakefulness. Then alone something can be achieved. This is the call of the Bhagavad Gita. This is the call of the Avadhuta Gita. This is the call of the teachings of Master Jesus. And this is the central call of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji: Do real *sadhana*, my dear children. Do real *sadhana*.

Every day one has to renew one's spiritual life. Then alone life will continue to remain spiritual. Every day one should exert to banish the darkness from within oneself and make it shine with the light of an awakened discrimination, spiritual enquiry and awareness. That is the great task. Apply

yourself to that task and become blessed. Go again and again to the Bhagavad Gita. Go again and again to the Avadhuta Gita. Go again and again to the New Testament. Go again and again to the Voice of the Himalayas. Render yourself a great fire of renunciation, aspiration, devotion and dedication to *sadhana*. Let that fire burn away all dross and make you shine radiantly with an awakened and dynamic divinity. Apply yourself to this task with one-pointedness, not allowing yourself to be diverted in any other direction. This is the thing needful. God bless you!

The Call Of The Great Ones

Worshipful homage unto the Universal Spirit, the eternal Cosmic Being, Who has sent each individual soul here into this earth plane for evolving, for an ascent unto Divinity, for steadily progressing towards that ultimate fulfilment of God's plan for each individual part of His, which is fullest illumination and enlightenment, the knowing of oneself to be part of God, the journey back unto fullness, freedom, perfection, absolute Divinity! Worshipful homage unto that Being Who has sent us forth here, and now has decided that our outward journey has been sufficient and that now we must start our inward journey, back towards our source and origin.

Loving adorations to beloved Gurudev and those like him who have been sent by the Supreme Being, by the Cosmic Eternal Spirit, to help each one of us in this inner journey of the spirit back towards its source and origin! They are the messengers of God. They are the prophets who call us back. They are the illumined masters. They are the enlightened world teachers. They are the sages established in God-consciousness who come amidst mankind and search our wandering souls whose time has now come to take to the inner path that leads to Self-realisation. Searching them out, they inspire, they awaken, they help, they guide. Therefore they are the supreme benefactors of mankind.

Most fortunate and blessed are we who have been called into this inner journey that complete our destiny. Thrice blessed are those who realise this, recognise this inner, mystical, spiritual truth, who, recognising the exact implication of this spiritual vocation, this call of the Eternal, whole-heartedly plunge into this spiritual journey and commence the inner ascent towards Divinity.

That is the call of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita: *tasmad yogi bhava'rjuna* (Therefore become a Yogi, O Arjuna). Come, awake, arise with firm resolution and seek the Immortal, move towards the Eternal. Strive for Self-realisation. Thus, that soul who recognises the implications of being upon the earth plane as a human individual is fortunate. He is not labouring under a handicap. On the contrary he is at a vantage point. He takes advantage of this great opportunity and concentrates all his energy, all his attention upon this great vocation and becomes thrice blessed.

Thus is the call of Dattatreya, the great Guru. You are the ever-liberated one. You have no *karmic* bondage. Neither do you have any bondage of physical *karma*, nor bondage of verbal *karma*, nor bondage of mental *karma*. Free of all bondage, you are the ever-liberated Spirit, the Cosmic Being. Why do you not recognise this fact? Why do you still wander about, groping, falling, stumbling? Why do you weep and wail? Come, rejoice and enter into this adventure of life. Joyously undertake this pilgrimage to the pinnacle of perfection.

Jesus too calls: Most fortunate and blessed are ye. Come, come, seek the Eternal. Give it first priority. That is the highest value. It is the pearl of surpassing price, to have which it is worthwhile throwing aside and giving up everything else.

If a farmer, a labourer even, discovers that there is hidden gold in the field he is labouring in, then he goes home and sells away everything that he has and purchases that small plot of land. People may think that this person is foolish: What is he doing? Paying such an exorbitant price for this bit of land is madness! But he knows that the price that he is paying is nothing, because this plot of land contains hidden gold, a hundredfold more valuable than the price he is now paying. He knows.

Thus it is with the awakened individual soul. He knows that everything that has been given up for the spiritual ideal is nothing. Nothing has been given up. For the spiritual ideal is more valuable than all the gold and silver and diamonds and the wealth of the world put together. It is the treasure of treasures, the wealth of wealths, the pearl of surpassing price, *atulya*, unparalleled. He knows, and therefore he takes this step with rejoicing. He says: My renunciation is no renunciation. It is a great acquisition, a great gain.

Thus with knowledge and wisdom, with understanding and recognition, with clear vision and insight, the great step is taken, and it is rejoicing all the way. For every moment, each step and every breath, it is the fulfilment of God's divine plan for the fortunate individual soul. Thus, one must rightly understand, appraise, evaluate and recognise the life spiritual, the ideal divine and the goal supreme. That is wisdom. That is real blessedness.

Then one brings to bear all enthusiasm and all energy to this quest, because one knows the worth of what one is doing. And that is a great thing. Thus is the sharing of this day in the name of beloved and worshipful Swami Sivanandaji, in whose presence we are drawn together so that we may open each day with clarity and not confusion, with keen enthusiasm and interest and not half-heartedness, not lukewarmness, that we may be blessed and that we may walk in the light. May our lives be lived in the light of this recognition and wisdom. God bless you all, most fortunate souls, that you may thus live with understanding and move towards divine perfection, which is our calling and our divine destiny!

The Call Of Dattatreya

Worshipful homage unto Dattatreya, *the trimurti avatara*, the divine son of the austere and illumined Sri Atri Maharshi and *sati sadhvi, mahapativrata, rishi patni* Sri Anasuya. May the benedictions of this divine couple be upon all married couples, in all countries, throughout the world.

The divine trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara were born as the unique divine child Dattatreya. Actually Dattatreya was born as triplets, three children, and yet there were not born, they were immaculate conceptions. Later on they gave a boon that they would be born as children of Sage Atri and Anasuya in a natural and normal way, and then they disappeared. Anasuya became the mother of these three children, but later on two of them withdrew into their abodes. Somatreya, the manifestation of Brahma, the creator, and Durasatreya, the manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and then they returned to their abodes leaving behind their unique symbols. Brahma left the *kamandalu* and *maala*, Lord Siva left the *trishula* and *damaru* and the *sankha* and *chakra* were retained by Lord Vishnu. So Dattatreya is the manifestation of all the trinity, *brahma vishnu sivatmaka svarupa*.

And this unique manifestation was the direct result of the irresistible devotion of a chaste *dharmapatni*, Sati Anasuya, the wife of the great sage Atri Maharshi. Her chastity was well known throughout the three worlds, the celestial worlds, the heavenly worlds and this earth plane. She was known to be the symbol of the highest purity as a housewife. And it was the power of her chastity that rendered the three *murtis* into little infants. Later on it was the same power of chastity and her chaste love for these infants that made them grant the boon that she desired.

May the blessings of *sati sadhvi* Anasuya be upon all women throughout this world today. May they be filled with the lofty, supreme power of life-sanctifying chastity and may the power of the *tapasya* of Atri Maharshi bless all *sad-grihasthas* and make them shine with *sadhachara*, shine with power of purity, self-control and fidelity to their life-partner. This is the one thing needful in the world of today.

For it is the character, the nature of the parents, their purity of conduct and character, that decides the nature, *svabhava*, and the normal fibre of the child that is born to them. For the child is not biologically or physically different and apart from the father and mother. They are one. It is the parents themselves manifesting in the form of a new generation. Therefore, what the parents are, what their inner state or condition is, their psyche is, becomes the nature of the child. It is that which decides its behaviour.

Therefore, if the world of tomorrow is to be peopled by citizens of sterling moral character, of self-control, moderation, purity, high idealism, chastity, good

conduct and lofty character, then it is indispensably necessary that the source from which they spring should be of the same lofty nature. If one generation is fired with lofty idealism and is of sterling moral worth, then the succeeding generation will also tend to be likewise, to be of great moral worth.

Therefore, there is a close connection between a married couple and their offspring. From the offspring you can judge what the parents might have been. From the parents you can judge what the offspring is going to be, quite apart from the fact that each *jivatma*, individual soul, comes with its own previous *karma-janita* (born of *karma*) *samskaras* and *vasanas*. The austere, self-controlled sage of sterling character and conduct, Atri Maharshi and the shining exemplar of absolute chastity and fidelity, Sati Anasuya, thus became worthy of being parents to no less than God Himself, the divine trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara themselves. By the power of her chastity and his penance, they proved eminently deserving and worthy of being parents of Divinity.

May the divine grace of Dattatreya be upon you all. He was a supreme Yogi. Like Dakshinamurti, He was the *adi guru*, the primal World Teacher. Contemplate His life. Meditate upon Him. Feel His divine presence. Evoke in your mind the sacred memory of Sati Anasuya and Atri Maharshi, the power of chastity, and divine grace in the form of Divinity taking birth at the earnest supplication and prayer of a heart filled with devotion. The earnest prayer of a heart filled with devotion never goes unanswered or unfulfilled. This is what the advent, the *avatara* of Dattatreya represents or proves.

Try ever to be steeped in the lofty teachings of Guru Dattatreya. His one admonition and His one teaching was God-consciousness. Until you realise God, attain God-consciousness and become established in God-consciousness, every strive to keep yourself by continued, unbroken effort in a state of awareness of your divinity, at least upon the intellectual level. May there not even be one moment when there is any doubt about your divinity in your mind or intellect. May your intellect be firmly based, with absolute conviction, upon this truth: I am divine. I am immortal soul, birthless and deathless, beyond time and space, without name and form. I am Atman, formless. I have no limitations. The body does not limit me. The mind does not confine me. I am the limitless, all-pervading Divine-consciousness. This is my true identity. This is my real nature.

By constant affirmation of your divinity, develop within yourself, within your interior, a state of feeling and thinking, a state of intellectual conviction of your supreme divine nature. This is the one teaching of Jagat Guru, Adi Guru Dattatreya. Never fall into the error, the slumber of Self-forgetfulness or ignorance. Ever strive to keep yourself in a state of ever-wakeful awareness of your divinity. And as His benediction and *prasad*, this is the one thing we should strive to receive from Him today. Because, he is an immortal Who is ever present. He is a *nitya avatara*, a *pratyaksha devata*, a living, immortal manifestation of Divinity upon the earth plane. And His direct admonition is: Be

aware, be aware, Be rooted in the consciousness of your essential nature, of your divinity.

And beloved and worshipful Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji ever hammered this fact into the minds of all his disciples and all *sadhaks* and seekers who came to him for spiritual instruction. You are not this body. You are not this mind. You are immortal soul. Know thyself and be free. That was Gurudev. That was Gurudev's central message, his central call to modern mankind.

Awake! You are not this perishable clay, this cage of flesh and bones. You are not this restless mind filled with ego, non-discrimination, ignorance and selfishness. You are not this little, finite intellect prone to a hundred errors, subject to confusion and also capable of misleading you through *avichara* and *aviveka*. Body, mind, intellect and their functions are all characterised by limitations and imperfections.

Blessed Immortal Atman, be aware that thou art beyond these three finite instruments, *upadhis*, that you have acquired through human birth on this planet earth. They cannot touch or alter the truth of your real identity. Enquire, 'Who am I?' Know thyself and be free. Thou art not this body, not this mind. Thou art immortal soul. Thus beloved and worshipful Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji echoed the great teachings of Dattatreya to twentieth century mankind. He is to us what Dattatreya was during His times, in days of yore.

May the blessings of Gurudev, the blessings of Dattatreya and the benedictions of Sati Anasuya and Sage Atri Maharshi enrich your spiritual life and elevate you to lofty heights of divine consciousness and awareness!

Booklet Three

"All thing become possible with persistence, perseverance, patience and above all sincerity. Having unwavering faith in yourself and with steady, continuous effort, you will find yourself rising higher and higher. By steady, persistent and patient effort, you will find yourself in that supreme peak of perfection."

-Sri Swami Chidananda



Thy Kingdom Come

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! We are fortunate to have conceived of a way of life where each day starts with divine Name, prayer and divine contemplation. By the grace, love and goodwill of beloved and worshipful Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, in this holy Ashram of his there is scope to constantly keep in a state of remembrance of God, to start the day with God, fill the day with God and end the day with God. For in this God-filled atmosphere, in every direction, one encounters something connected with God. In numerous places, with numerous persons, upon numerous occasions one is brought into *bhagavat chintana*, *atma-chintana*, *tattva-chintana*, one is brought into the remembrance of God, into awareness of our higher goal, into awareness of a greater Reality and into the awareness of a deeper purpose in our life, into the awareness of the significance of our human status.

In this Iron Age, when *adharma* (unrighteousness), *bhagavat-vismriti* (forgetfulness of God), *vimukhi-drishti* (view against God), *atyachara* (irreligious conduct) is the order of the day, consider the meaningfulness of this unique God-filled way of life. Consider the normal trend of Kali Yuga and consider the trend of your life. And to whom do you owe it? What is its value and how best to utilise it? How best to benefit by it?

These are things which should be very much on our minds as we approach the advent of the New Year and the advent of a great *avatara*, a great descent of Divinity, who proclaimed: Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and What availeth it a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul? He proclaimed the secondariness of all things in comparison to the attaining of God, the attainment of the great Goal, which is the fulfilment of the central destiny of

man, the central purpose of life.

His greatest commandment was to adore God with all your heart, with all your mind, with your entire being. Let your life be whole-souled devotion to God, *parabhakti*. He not only proclaimed this message, preached this teaching, but He lived this teaching. He was perpetually and continuously engaged in doing good, helping others, relieving suffering. At the same time, inwardly, He was permanently rooted in God, perpetually in a state of God-communion inwardly. He literally lived, moved and had His being in God.

He was epitome of the Gita *jnana-upadesa*. In Him we find the very embodiment of *Gita-jnana* and the Gita Yoga. *Yogasthah kuru karmani* (Perform action, being steadfast in Yoga), *mam anusmara yuddhya cha* (Remember Me and fight). Be rooted in God and do good to your fellow beings. He taught this and said that the secret of this is to always be in a state of prayer within.

Prayer is a state of being linked up with God. Prayer is a state of being connected in spirit with God inwardly. The apparent outer part of you flows outwards towards *prapancha*, towards *samsara*, towards the *aneka*, the many, towards the manifestation. The superficial part of you is ever moving outwards because the mind and the senses are outgoing; whereas, simultaneously, the essence of your being is constantly moving inwards towards God, constantly flowing Godward in a continuous, unbroken stream.

Even as the rivers keep on flowing towards the ocean or the sea, even so your *antah-chetana*, your inner spiritual consciousness, is in a state of constant flow towards the source and origin of its being. Inwardly your life is God-oriented. It is a continuous, unbroken flow towards God, a current of consciousness flowing towards God unceasingly. Externally, to fulfil obligations, do your duty and play your part, you apparently flow outwards. But that which flows outwards towards *prapancha*, towards *samsara*, towards the many, *aneka*, is not your real being. It is something temporarily added on to you that flows towards *prapancha* because it belongs to *prapancha*. Your real being that belongs to God ever keeps on moving towards God. Your authentic, true life, genuine life, is a constant Godward flow through remembrance, through prayer, through invoking His Name and grace. It is not by bread alone that man lives, but by the Name of God.

Thus Jesus taught us this Yoga of God-centred living in the midst of activity. And He Himself personified this state, the outer state of constantly doing good and the inner state of constantly being rooted in God through prayer, remembrance, the Name and dedication.

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

Thus He taught His disciples to pray. Thy kingdom come means May Your kingdom come into my heart. May you reign over my heart; not anything else not gross passions, not selfishness, not worldliness, not desire, but may You be the monarch of my heart. You who are the ruler of Your kingdom, establish Your kingdom here, as it is already established there in the inner dimension of the Spirit, the unseen world of the Spirit.

That was the call to the Lord to come and take charge. Rule over me. Rule over my life. Be my centre. May You alone prevail and not my ego, not my ego-consciousness, not my ignorance, *ajnana*, not my *avichara*, not my lack of perception, but Your wisdom, Your light, Your divinity. Let that alone prevail in the interior of my being. Let me be thus filled with God, filled with Thee, filled with Divinity. That was the prayer.

Upon the eve of the advent of this great Teacher, let us try to know, assess and understand the meaning of His teachings and the place of His teachings in the living of our daily lives. This would be the most significant and important part of our celebration of the day of His advent. Let us try to find out the place and role His teaching has to play in our lives as spiritual beings, leading a spiritual life in a spiritual atmosphere, in a God-filled atmosphere.

This then is the sharing, in the presence of beloved and worshipful Gurudev, as we begin yet another day. Every day is new. It is not like any other day that has passed. Let it, therefore, be to us an upward ascent, onward progress, moving in a Godward direction towards the Goal Supreme!

Thy Will Be Done

Worshipful homage unto the divine Universal Spirit that pervades and permeates countless billions of universes like the one in which we are living. May we contemplate that Reality which also is the indwelling presence in all created things, dwelling in equal measure in the smallest and the greatest, hallowing and sanctifying all things, worthy of reverence and deserving of consideration in our thoughts, words and deeds as we live our life.

Loving adorations to the spiritual presence of beloved and worshipful Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji who taught us to behold that Being in all names and forms and to serve that Supreme Reality in and through all names and forms, who taught us to ever remember that great Reality in the midst of

passing phenomenal appearances, to ever sing His glory, to ever chant His Divine Name, the all-purifying, sanctifying, liberating Divine Name and to ever be rooted in Him.

Thus indeed did he teach us to pray even as the Divine Master Jesus taught us to pray, addressing ourselves directly to the eternal source and origin of our being even as a child would address itself to its father: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Let it prevail in our heart as well as in our mind and intellect.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. So He taught us to pray. And in our own times, even so did Gurudev teach us to pray:

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love!
Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.
Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.
Thou art Satchidananda
(Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute).
Thou art the Indweller of all beings

Grant us an understanding heart,
Equal vision, balanced mind,
Faith, devotion and wisdom.
Grant us inner spiritual strength
To resist temptations and to control the mind.

Free us from egoism, lust, greed, hatred, anger and jealousy.
Fill our hearts with divine virtues.
Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms
Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us ever remember Thee.
Let us ever sing Thy glories.
Let Thy name be ever on our lips.
Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever

Thus a teacher, a master of our own times, taught us to address ourselves directly to that Being who is the unchanging, ever-present Eternal Reality in the midst of changing phenomenal appearances, who is the Reality within our passing, temporary, perishable bodies, who is the Reality in the midst of our ever-fluctuating, ever-fickle mind *chanchal man me susthira tattva vah ek antaryami* (In the unsteady mind dwells that steady Reality, that one Indweller). *Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese'rijuna tishthati* (God dwells in the hearts of all

beings, O Arjuna) the ever-stable, the ever-peaceful spiritual principle and essence in the midst of this restless and fickle mind.

That Being is the ever-luminous presence within this intellect, which is sometimes bright with discrimination, spiritual enquiry and alertness, sometimes overcome with the darkness of spiritual indifference, subject to folly, lack of discrimination and spiritual forgetfulness, *avichara, aviveka*. In the midst of that mind and intellect, that Being is ever-luminous: *jyotisham api tad jyotis tamasah param uchyate; jnanam, jneyam jnanagamyam hridi sarvasya vishthitam* (That, the Light of lights, is said to be beyond darkness; knowledge, the knowable and the goal of knowledge; abides in the hearts of all). It is the Kingdom of God within. It is the Kingdom of Heaven within. It is the Spirit of God, the Light that shines forever in this body-house, the undimmed Light, the splendid radiance that ever shines within this human personality.

They taught us to address ourselves directly to that Being: O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love... Thou art the Indweller of all Beings. Our Father which art in heaven... Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Let Your will prevail upon this earthly frame of ours. Let Your will prevail and guide our senses. Let our senses obey Your will, Your direction, Your spiritual admonitions. Let our body, its appetites and movements, and our mind obey Your will, carry out Your admonitions.

That is the relevance of the kingdom here and now. That is the prevailing of the will of the Divine upon earth, meaning our earthly human personalities and propensities. Let them be guided and directed by the will of God, not by our own little, petty will. Nor let them be guided by the will of others to whom we have become enslaved through infatuated delusion or attachment, so that we become a toy in their hands. Then it is not God that prevails, but it is our infatuation that prevails. It is not God that prevails, it is our self-will that prevails. Either due to selfishness, self prevails, or due to infatuation one becomes enslaved and guided by the earthly will of others.

A political leader becomes a slave to those who support him in his power, in his status, in his position. He becomes a slave and loses his integrity. He knows what is right but does what is wrong. He becomes enslaved to the party and to the voters and supporters that put him in his position of power and authority. He is subject to their pushes and pulls. He seems to wield power, but he is under the power of someone else.

Even so, monks, Swamis, abbots, *mahamandalesvars* become enslaved by their own structure, their organisations, institutions, Ashrams, by the artificial organisational structure that grows up around them, in which they function. Difficult indeed it is for a worldly person to make himself free from worldly influences. Difficult indeed it is for a political figurehead to be free from his political supporters. And difficult indeed it is for a spiritual personality, a monastic,

to liberate himself from the pressures of his own organisation, his own prestigious place of power and recognition, and retain the simplicity of his heart, retain the integrity of his renunciation, his *anasakti*. Difficult indeed!

Only through the grace of God can monasticism be authentic in the midst of an organisational structure. Only through the grace of God can a political leader have the courage and strength to stick to lofty ethical principles and moral ideals in the midst of his political life and action. And difficult indeed it is for a person in the world to be able to overcome worldly influences and act according to his conscience, his inner convictions or the higher ideals placed before us by our ancients.

That is the struggle of life. That is the challenge. That is the true *abhyasa* (practice) to keep intact the genuineness of our essential nature in the midst of the artifices of these added factors that go to make up our human personality structure, the artifices of the senses and the mind with its desires, its whimsies, its imaginations, its fancies, its cravings and its ambitions.

That is the *sadhana*. That is the great *abhyasa* to be rooted in the Divine, to be guided by the Divine, to recognise the reality of the Divine and the Divine alone, and to give secondary place to all that is other than the Divine. It is for this that strength has to be prayed for. Deliver us from this evil. Lead us not into this temptation of succumbing to the influences, pulls and pressures of that which is other than the Divine, that which is other than your ideal, that which is other than the direction of your goal.

In the midst of the many pulls and the many pressures from other directions, to be what God means you to be, to be what Jesus the Christ wished you to be, wanted you to be, to be what Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji has clearly asked us to be, that is what proves, that is the touchstone, that is the acid test of the authenticity and the genuineness of our spirituality and our morality. What it is able to withstand, what it is able to resist, what it is able to overcome and still be able to be what it is that is the acid test.

The relevance of the teachings of Jesus is not the church nor merely the words of the Bible. The relevance of the teachings of Jesus is the fact that He is an ever-present Presence, that He is an eternal witness, a companion who walks by us, who lives with us and who notes every movement, every thought, within and without us. It is this presence of His divine personality that has outlived His own contemporary times and is powerfully present.

Jesus the Christ is not dead. Buddha is not dead. Great ones who have merged in Brahman, they do not die. They step out of the body and continue to prevail, pervading all space as a presence that is relevant to everyone who recognises kinship with them. The Guru is eternal. The Divine Teachers are eternal. The relevance of Jesus and the Christianity that He taught is His

presence, divine presence, here and now and always unto worlds without end.

So, one who is a disciple, one who is a believer, one who makes his life, words and actions a response to the call Follow Me, one who is such a follower, keeps, therefore, as one's touchstone or criterion for action: If Jesus was by my side or I was walking with Him, what would I do in this particular situation? How would He have me behave at this moment, in this situation? Your life and the living of your life should be an answer to this question. It is upon the basis of this criterion that one should mould one's character and conduct, life and actions. That is the essence of Christianity. That is the heart of true belief, and it is indeed the very life breath of obedience.

Ponder this truth upon the eve of Christmas Eve. May Jesus become a living factor in our lives. Then indeed Christmas will become a turning point, a meaningful entry point into a new life of light and wisdom. Arise and follow Me. *Uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise, become enlightened)!

Heaven Is Where God Is

Worshipful homage unto the supreme Universal Reality that pervades all space, envelops all existence and indwells all beings, which is the *nitya* (eternal) ever present in the *anitya*, which is the *avinasi* (indestructible), ever present in the *nasaya-vastu* (perishable). *Samamsarveshu bhuteshu tishthantam paramesvaram, vinasyatsvavinasyantam yah pasyati sa pasyati* (He sees, who sees the Supreme Lord existing equally in all beings, the unperishable within the perishing).

O Lord, grant us that vision that will enable us to perceive the eternal, the permanent, the everlasting, which is concealed, hidden, occult, yet present in the non-eternal, the temporary and the passing. Let us behold eternity in time. Let us behold the unmanifest within the manifest. Let us behold the concealed, *gudhah*, within that which is apparent. *Eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah* (God, Who is one only, is hidden in all beings). Let us behold the formless within all names and forms.

Thus beholding, thus recognising, seeing all things as the signature of God, let us develop the consciousness of His presence at all times. Learning to perceive the hidden Divinity pervading this apparently material universe, let us be able to live, move and have our being in God. Let us be able to recognise that now, here is the Kingdom of God. My body may be part of material earth, but I shall ever dwell in the now, here Kingdom of God, the now, here Kingdom of Heaven.

Let this be the inner consciousness of the awakened seeker. Even as he is struggling to attain God-experience, he already begins to develop the

consciousness of the ultimate Reality that has to be attained, through fervent *bhav*, through faith, through feeling, through firm conviction, with mind and intellect and body *mamevanusmara... mayibuddhimnivesaya... tameva saranam gaccha sarva bhavena bharata* (Remembering Me only... Let your intellect dwell in Me... Seek refuge in Me with all your heart and being, O Arjuna). This is *isvara-pranidhana* (devotion to the Lord). This is dwelling on earth but living in God, living in heaven.

The truth is not that where heaven is, there God is. The truth is that where God is, there heaven is. Therefore, you, as awakened, intelligent beings, endowed with perception, endowed with knowledge of the scriptures, endowed with understanding, you can very easily understand this fact, that it is not that God is where heaven is. You cannot confine God to a locality. On the contrary, heaven is where God is. And God is now, here. God is the all-pervading one and only absolute Reality. Therefore, we are ever in heaven, ever in God, ever in His kingdom. It is the growing awareness of this fact that is required, not bringing into fact something that does not exist as a fact.

Thy kingdom come. When we pray thus, it is a prayer for an inner awakening to an ever-present reality. It is not a prayer for the coming into being of a state of affairs that does not at the moment prevail. Even when we were not, God prevailed as the all-pervading, universal presence. Even while we are, God prevails as the all-pervading, universal presence, the one great fact. And, even if we pass from hence and are no longer here, even then God will prevail as the one universal presence divine, the all-pervading presence divine. Thus it is that you should pray for the recognition of an eternal fact, that He dwells within us and we dwell in Him God in you and you in God. O Lord, grant us recognition of this fact!

Thus is the sharing this dawn, in the spiritual presence of Gurudev, a sharing accompanied by the prayer that the peace of the ever-present God pervade your heart and mind, your entire being. May peace flood into your consciousness and envelop you. May you dwell in peace. May you live to share and to give this peace. May peace be the one thing that you pray for others, desire for others. And also may joy fill your heart. For where God is, there is perennial joy, for Brahman is *anandam*. In the beginning was Brahman, now is Brahman, always shall prevail Brahman. Therefore, in the beginning was bliss, now is bliss, and forever, worlds without end, there shall prevail this bliss supreme.

Upon this day, as the whole world awakens to Christmas, my wish for you all is peace. Upon this auspicious dawn my good wishes for you all is joy. And my prayer to you all is that you may live to make your life an unbroken, ceaseless flow of peace and joy into God's good earth. May you live to share and to give this peace and joy unto all your fellow beings, that goodwill may prevail, that all may rejoice. *Sarvesham santir-bhavatu* (Peace be unto all beings). Live to realise

and to make others realise this prayer. May the ever-present, indwelling peace of the Kingdom of Heaven within you, in which you dwell in the Spirit, may that peace be your gift to mankind day by day, day after day, through your every thought, every feeling, every word and action. May you live and move in this world as a messenger of peace, an angel of peace. May you live and move in this world as a source of joy to one and all. This prayer I offer to all of you as my Christmas gift.

This truth of God's presence, this truth of the prevalence of the Kingdom of Heaven all around us, now, here, is to be heard, reflected upon and meditated upon, so that you may live to rejoice in the joy of the Lord, you may live to grant peace unto all, yourself being established in that peace that passeth understanding. May God and all His saints, may the Divine Master of the Middle East, the prophet of Nazareth, the child that was born in Bethlehem nearly 2000 years ago, the Wisdom Teacher Who gave us the Sermon on the Mount, may that Being ever walk beside you. May the wisdom teachings of that Being be the light upon your path and may His radiant life be a lofty ideal and example for you to emulate in your life, even as you are, step by step, trying to ascend the steep path that leads to the pinnacle of perfection and liberation and illumination.

God bless you all! May all His prophets and messengers bless you. May you attain that peace and joy that they came to grant mankind through their life, their example and their teachings. May the love and blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ, may the love and benedictions of beloved Holy Master Gurudev Sivanandaji make your life divine and grant you the experience of that peace, not in the distant future, not in some other realm, but now and here, every moment of your life!

Have Divinity In Your Mind And Heart

Every day is a renewal. Every morning is a daily miracle. This joy you feel is life. All creation is gifted with the ecstasy of God's light. *Gertrude Stein*. Therefore, beholding the light of God in all creation, let us live each day in this awareness of God's light, of God's divine presence.

Let us meditate of this one theme: the New Year should be to us a year of divinity. Let us live it in the awareness that we are more than human, we are really divine. Our human personality is a temporary, added factor beneath which lies our reality, our *nija svarupa* (true nature).

We are radiant centres of divinity, and therefore our life should be a constant expression, a dynamic manifestation of divinity in thought, word and action. We should live life in order to manifest our divinity in all that we do, in all the movements and actions of our life. Then alone our life is authentic, genuine, true. Otherwise it will only be an anomaly of life. If we are divine within but our life outside is undivine, unspiritual, ugly, full of all that contradicts our divinity, then

that is not life. It is a living falsehood, a living lie. It is a contradiction.

Thus, at this moment when we are about to bid farewell to the old year and step into the portals of the new, let us contemplate this truth: we are divine; therefore, divine should be our life in all its parts. All twelve months, each day of every month, twenty-four hours each day, let us live in this awareness, let us make our life divine. Let us make it a thing of beauty that is a joy for all beings. Let us live as children of God, godly in our nature. That is real religion to be what we are, children of God, shining with His godliness.

Therefore, I commend to you this maxim and resolve: always have divinity in your mind and heart. That should be the keynote of your life during the entire New Year, so that out of your life much good comes to you and much good comes to all.

Nothing Is impossible For Faith And Sincerity

Radiant Atman! Let the year that stretches before you be to you an ascending, upward stairway of 365 steps that leads to supreme heights of evolution, culture, spirituality and noble living, of sublime selflessness, sacrifice and service. May you scale these heights and go beyond into Divine-consciousness, into God-consciousness, Divine-awareness. Let each day be to you an upward, ascending step towards that great pinnacle and let the 31st of December of this coming year find you way above where you are at this moment.

Move forward this New Year determined to make it a steady, upward ascent of the spirit towards its great and divine destiny. And what you wish to make it, that it will be. For the supreme power abides within you. There is nothing impossible for an aspiring soul, for a really determined *sadhaka*. All things become possible with persistence, perseverance, patience and above all sincerity. Having unwavering faith in yourself and with steady, continuous effort slow but steady, little but ceaseless you will find yourself rising higher and higher. By steady, persistent and patient effort, you will find yourself in that supreme peak of perfection. That is the key.

Believe in yourself. Have faith, and know that nothing is impossible for faith and sincerity, for a true desire and aspiration to attain and to achieve. For you are made for it and this life is meant for it. And this is your birthright that you can claim. God bless you!

Worship That Is Dear To The Lord

Worshipful homage unto the eternal Reality the one, beginningless, endless, changeless, infinite, eternal, all-pervading, immanent and indwelling Reality that is the source, support and ultimate fulfilment of all existence! Infinite and all-pervading; therefore, everywhere present. Dwelling within you; therefore,

nearer to you than yourself. That Being, in whom you live, move and have your being, indwells the heart-shrine of your body-temple; and, therefore, your every movement is a divine activity.

In this inner shrine of your heart in the temple of your body, worship Him with the flowers of truthfulness, with the flower of verity, with the flower of honesty, with the flower of loyalty to your vows, with the flower of a guileless heart, a frank and simple-hearted disposition. Worship Him with a life devoid of all crookedness, deceit and double-dealing. Worship Him with the flowers of straightforwardness, simplicity, purity and compassion. Worship Him with the flowers of a self-controlled life, with control of your senses.

These are the flowers that are dear to that Being who is the indweller of your heart, the sanctum sanctorum of this body-temple of yours. He does not desire costly ingredients for His worship. He is the overlord of countless worlds. He owns everything. What can you give Him? There is nothing that doesn't belong to Him.

But your ego belongs to you, your heart belongs to you, your life belongs to you. If you offer your heart, your ego, your life as a flower at His feet, then indeed His grace will flow into you. For He delights, rejoices and finds intense pleasure when He is offered the flowers of truthfulness, forgiveness, compassion, simplicity, guilelessness, where there is no deviousness, no double-talk, no concealment, no human cleverness.

These are all despicable from the point of view of the spiritual ideal of a saint or a man of wisdom. These are the devices of the cunning and crooked, the dishonest and cheats. Therefore, these despicable devices do not become the dignity of a spiritual personality. They do not become a *sannyasin*, a *sadhaka* and a devotee of God who have chosen God as their highest value.

When these prevail, when these are not eradicated through introspection, self-examination, and prayer, they act as a brake in your spiritual life. You stop proceeding further. You may be living a spiritual life for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, but you will be where you are, because you are shackled to your earthly imperfection, to your human defects and foibles you are not seeking to progress in divinity. That is the tragedy of spiritual life to miss the way.

In our Vedic way of life, our entire life style is pervaded by the concept of *dharma*. Whatever you are, in whatever context, you have a certain *dharma* to fulfil. And for you who have become aware through the teachings of the Guru that your real identity is divinity, to be true to what you really are and to manifest your real identity in your life by living a divine life, by thinking divinely, speaking divinely, acting divinely, living divinely that is your *dharma*. Because you are meant to express outside what you are inside.

And if you know that you are part of *paramatma* you are *jivatma*, part of *paramatma* that you are divine, that divinity is your real identity, then it becomes your *dharma*, your *svadharma* to live to manifest what you are. To be what you are is your *svadharma*, to be contrary to it is to move away from truth.

To be true to the teachings of your Guru is truthfulness. To deviate from the teachings of your Guru is falsehood. To be true to the solemn vows you have taken is truthfulness. To give up such vows is to live a life of falsehood.

Truth pervades every activity of our life within and without. Therefore, ponder deeply the all-pervasive presence of the principle of truth in your own life inner and outer, subjective and objective, individual and collective and worship that great Being, that shines with the strength of a million suns in your heart-shrine, with the flower of truth! That is the highest worship, and that is your greatest duty!

Booklet Four

"Being humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than the tree, free from vanity and being respectful to others, one should sing the glories of Lord Hari."

-Gauranga Mahaprabhu

"All this points to one fact: That ego is folly, and wisdom lies in renouncing and transcending ego."

-Sri Swami Chidananda



The Subjective Dimension Of Prayer

Radiant Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! We will soon be observing the sacred annual worship of Lord Siva, Mahasivaratri. It is customary to regard and to speak of Lord Siva in terms of being a destroyer. The three aspects of the Supreme Being are Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Siva, the term destroyer. They say *srishti*, *sthiti* and *layakartas*. The "destroyer" is usually not used by me. I use the word "dissolver," because they do not refer to Lord Siva in mythology as *nasakarta* or *vinasakarta* (destroyer) but as *layakarta* (dissolver). *Laya* means subsiding back into the original state. *Srishti* is emerging into variegated names and forms, the One becoming the many. *Sthiti* is preserving, continuing in time, and *laya* is merging back into the original unmanifest state, the nameless, formless unified state.

But, quite apart from this concept of Lord Siva as dissolver, it is very widely held, especially in North India, that He is the boon-giver. Even though He is the highest of all gods, *devadi-deva* (Lord of lords), *Mahadeva* (the great God), yet He is easily pleased. He is very simple and prepared to give anything, to give *anything*. And He is also a saviour. He saved Markandeya, His boy devotee, from death by appearing before him and daring lord Yama to touch His devotee. So here, He is not so much the destroyer as He is the protector and saviour. There are innumerable such instances of His saving grace.

And it does not take much to please Him. Pour some water over Him, give a Bilva leaf and chant His Name once. That is enough. So one of the terms with which He is referred to is *asutosh*, very easily propitiated, easily pleased—*asutosh mahadev*.

But, the most endearing term by which He is popularly referred to by devotees, in North India especially, is the term “bhola.” Bhola means simple-minded, one who has no complication in his thinking, feeling and acting. He has no complications, no crookedness, no cleverness. He is simple-minded. They call Him Bhola Nath. They call Him Bhola Sambhu. Bhola means simple. He believes whatever He sees. He does not look beyond. Even if a person asks for a boon with a wrong intention, He does not look to the intention.

If a person has taken His Name, or performed *tapasya*, He does not look into either the intention or the consequences. To anyone who propitiates Him, takes His Name, prays to Him, does *tapasya* and pleases Him, He asks: “What do you want?” Ravana did intense *tapasya* and just to indicate to what extent Lord Siva is simple, easy to please and prepared to give everything, He gave His divine partner, Parvati.

It would indeed be a highly beneficial thing if everyone would undertake an *anushtana* commencing tomorrow and concluding on Mahasivaratri day. Regularly repeat eleven maalas of Om Namah Sivaya dedicated to the welfare of humanity. If you cannot repeat eleven at least repeat five, one maala for each letter of the *panchakshari mantra*. Om Namah Sivaya. It is very simple, very easy. In five minutes you can do it. It will not be a *purascharana*, but it will be an *anushtana*. A *japa anushtana* you can do, and dedicate it to the welfare of mankind and the peace of the world.

Now, let us consider this ancient tradition in India, especially religious India, that is, praying for others, praying for the world, praying for the welfare of mankind, for the welfare of all-creatures, praying for peace on earth, not only for mankind and all creatures but also for everything that exists, praying for peace, wishing peace, desiring peace and sending out thoughts of peace to everything that exists, to all existence. “Peace be unto all the five elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether.” It is desiring peace for the grass, herbs, plants and trees. It is desiring peace for the celestials, for the angelic host, for the gods right up to the creator, Brahma—*visvedeva santih* (peace to all the Gods), *brahma santih* (peace to Brahma), *santih eva santih* (peace for peace itself), wishing peace for peace itself. Let there be peace to all the Vedas, Vedic *mantras*, to everything. This is the ancient tradition.

Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu—May all beings in this universe be happy. *Sarvesham svasti-bhavatu*—May prosperity and welfare be unto all beings. *Sarvesham santir-bhavatu*—May peace be unto all beings. *Sarvesham purnam bhavatu*—May plenitude and fullness be unto all beings. *Sarvesham mangalam bhavatu*—May auspiciousness and blessedness be unto all beings. *Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*—May all be happy. *Sarve santu niramayah*—May all be free from disease, pain and suffering. *Sarve bhadra pasyantu*—May all behold that which is auspicious, pleasant, nothing fearful nor unpleasant. *Bhadra*

is auspicious, blessed, mild, pleasant. *Ma kaschid duhkhabag bhavet*—May not sorrow fall to the lot of anyone. Thus, this has been an ancient tradition—wishing well, wishing peace, happiness, prosperity, freedom from disease and pain, plenty, fullness, blessedness and auspiciousness to everyone.

The desirability of such prayer is not only because the world needs all these things. There is also the subjective dimension of prayer that has to be considered. The process has a very important effect upon the one who prays. By wishing for all that is positive, creative, constructive, good, conducive to welfare, auspicious and blessed to all that exists—all creatures, mankind, the whole world—it makes us aware that our ancients expected us to make life an active, dynamic process of constantly working to bring about those very conditions which we wish for, pray for, intend and want for others. For, unless our prayer is backed up by suitable action to bring about these conditions, it has no meaning.

If we wish peace for others and at the same time we are actively engaged in robbing others of their peace by disturbing them, agitating them, causing them distress, then we stand as a living lie. We stand in terrible contradiction to what we mouth through such prayers. We say one thing, but we act in another manner. We succeed in doing something that is contrary to that which we pray for. It thus becomes a very serious situation, a very undesirable state of affairs. Every day we say *ma kaschid duhkhabag bhavet*—May not sorrow fall to the lot of any being. Therefore, we have to be perpetually conscious, aware and careful that neither by thought, word nor deed do we create sorrow for others, grief for others.

“Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.” That is the sublime, noble prayer of Saint Francis. When we pray “May not sorrow fall to the lot of anyone,” then we should work in the way indicated by the simple prayer of St. Francis. “O Lord, where there is sadness, let me bring joy. Make me an instrument of joy to the lives of others. Make me an instrument of removing the sadness of others.” Axiomatically it means that if we wish happiness for others, joy for others, then we have to do something positively to bring joy to others; we have to also, simultaneously, engage in doing acts that remove the sorrow of others, lessen the grief of others, make people less sad. This is implied in this line from the simple prayer of St. Francis.

Apart from this, that such prayer is an indication of what we should work, live and act for, of what our great ancients have placed before us as an ideal for our life and the living of it, it also has still another aspect. By constantly thinking in such a positive manner of the happiness, welfare and peace of others, it brings about a change in our nature. Gradually we become so disposed to act in such a way, to live in such a way, that we become a centre of goodwill towards others, a centre of compassion and kindness towards others, a centre of peace for others. The constant repetition of such prayer, the constant dwelling upon these thoughts, and the constant harbouring of these feelings in our heart have a

transforming effect upon our own nature. It tends to gradually make us grow in this quality of goodwill towards all, of ill-will towards none, of compassion and kindness towards all, of prayerfully ever wanting to live in order to bring peace, solace, happiness and comfort to everyone.

This constant prayer has this effect, but only if we pray feelingfully, not mechanically. If, as a matter of routine, we go on uttering this prayer mechanically with lip-service, then of course, we will be deprived of this purifying, elevating and transforming effect. We will not benefit from it; we will not gain anything by it. It is only when, every time we pray, we pray with earnestness, with sincerity, with feeling, in a meaningful manner, then alone it is a great life-transforming power, it is a great purifying and uplifting power.

That is its effect upon the one who prays. It has this unfailing effect of making us grow into those very qualities we pray for. This is the subjective dimension of prayer—how it benefits the one who prays. Constantly having these thoughts, these feelings of goodwill, of kindness, compassion, friendliness, makes us a well-wisher of humanity, a being filled with loving kindness, with good thoughts, goodwill and love, wishing and praying for the peace of all.

Then indeed our life mission is being fulfilled, because we become a centre for radiating around us the quality which is of God, *daivi sampad*. Compassion, kindness, peace, light, joy all belong to God, and we make ourselves a channel for the manifestation of these God-qualities in this world of His. What greater blessedness can one have? What greater privilege than this can one have? And what greater satisfaction that this can one have in life than the satisfaction “I have not lived in vain; I have tried to make myself a true child of God, make myself a channel for manifesting the qualities of Him whom I address as father, mother, friend, relative, and Lord.” That indeed makes life worth living.

It is in this way that we must understand the incalculable value of prayer for the one who prays. Thus may prayer transform your life and make it Divine. God bless you all!

Wisdom Makes Devotion Fruitful

Homage unto the Divine Presence, Thou who art the universal Reality! Make us aware of Thy constant companionship with us, so that we may walk in Thy light, the light which shines within us as wisdom overcoming all folly and as knowledge banishing the darkness of ignorance. May we walk in the light of knowledge. May we walk the path and live in the light of wisdom. For that is good.

Beloved and worshipful Gurudev, you who shone on all as a great light of the wisdom of Vedanta in this sacred Uttarakand, the region of the divine Himalayas and the Ganga! Grant us the prayer: “From the darkness of ignorance may we rise up to the light of wisdom—*tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*.” Bless us with

that knowledge and wisdom that leads to peace and blessedness. For we know that thou hast lived thy life for *jnana yajna*, for the dissemination of spiritual knowledge, to disseminate the wisdom teachings of the Upanishads which shine as a supreme treasure of all humanity. The global human family is enriched by the invaluable wealth of Vedic wisdom, the crown and glory of human achievement.

Satyam jnanam anantam brahma. The Supreme Reality is the truth, it is wisdom—it is *satyam* and it is *jnanam*. And it is truth that is boundless and limitless, for it is absolute, beyond all relativity. Therefore it is *anantam*, endless. That wisdom is, therefore, immeasurable, being absolute wisdom, *kaivalyajnana*. It is a nectar of wisdom—*kaivalya jnanam amritam*—absolute nectar, wisdom.

Radiant Immortal Atman! A *sadhaka*, a spiritual seeker, a Yogi, is called a *jijnasu*. A *jijnasu* is one who seeks wisdom, knowledge. *Jijnasu* comes out of the word *jna* (to know). One who thirsts for knowledge, who is seeking knowledge and wisdom is called a *jijnasu*. So it behoves a *sadhaka*, a true seeker, to be a *jijnasu*.

For the highest value in life is declared to be *moksha*, liberation—*sadyomukti*, instantaneous liberation or *kramamukti*, gradual liberation, in stages. Whether instantaneous or gradual, freedom, liberation, *mukti*, has always been declared to be the highest goal of all human aspiration. And the *Srutis* declare: “*rite jnanam na muktih*—Without wisdom and knowledge, liberation is not possible.” There is no liberation, there is no freedom without knowledge or wisdom. This is an emphatic statement, a sure categorical declaration. Therefore it is necessary for one to be a *jijnasu*.

Wisdom is good. It is the highest good, the greatest good. Devotion or love is also supreme good; it can also liberate. But if devotion is accompanied by folly, if devotion is accompanied by non-wisdom or foolishness, then, the devotion notwithstanding, one invites trouble and one gets into trouble. This is borne out by the lives of all great mystics, all great *bhaktas*, all great saints. When they were foolish, they got into trouble. Then, afterwards, they prayed to God, they lamented, they cried desperately for help: “All is lost, O Lord, please help me. Thou art the helper of the helpless. I have committed this folly. Come, come! Save me! Save me!”

So, when they were foolish, they had to turn and call aloud for the Lord's grace. This we see in the lives of all spiritual, seeking souls, no matter how sincere they were, no matter how true their devotion. If they entered into folly, then, their devotion notwithstanding, their sincerity notwithstanding, they got into trouble. This is demonstrated in the lives of all great devotees of God. When they lost their head, when they lost their wisdom, then they were egoistic, they fell into the trap of desire, and then they lamented.

Therefore, while devotion is very good, all its goodness is robbed if folly creeps into the life of the devotee. Devotion, therefore, should be accompanied by wisdom. There is a prayer: “O God, give us serenity to accept what cannot be changed, courage to change what should be changed, and wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.”

“*He prabho ananda data jnan hamko dijiye*—O Giver of Bliss, grant us wisdom.” That is what the opening line of the prayer says which you sing daily. Now, if all people are seeking happiness and bliss, and they address God as the great giver of bliss, why do they also immediately ask for wisdom? It is worth reflecting over, for it proves that when you are seeking bliss and when you are addressing the One who is the giver of bliss, you know that even though He is ready to give you bliss, if you walk the way of folly you will deprive yourself of it—in spite of the fact that He is ever there waiting to grant you that bliss. “O Giver of Bliss, grant us wisdom.” Wisdom for what? Wisdom to cast out of us all that is not good, all that is undivine, all that is unspiritual. Wisdom to remove from ourselves, from within us, all that stands in the way of wisdom and bliss. “*Sighra sare durgunonko dura hamse kijiye. Lijiye hamko sarana me ham sadachari bane. Brahmachari dharma rakshaka satyavratadhari bane*—Grant us the wisdom to surrender ourselves to Thee, surrender the ego to Thee, and to walk the path of good conduct, to become established in the path of righteousness and spirituality, that supreme ideal way of life, that leads to *brahma jnana*. Let us defend that wisdom, carefully protect that wisdom, for we know that that is the guarantee of peace and joy. May we have the wisdom and ability to adhere to truthfulness, adhere to *satyavrata*.”

That is the wisdom one asks for in this prayer. For where there is wisdom, there is joy, there is peace. Shorn of wisdom, one enters into grief. Folly leads to lamentation. Arjuna lamented when he lost touch with wisdom. The Lord says: “The wise do not grieve. The wise look upon all with an equal eye. The awakened one, the one who is wise and lives in the wakefulness of knowledge, wakefulness of wisdom, does not run after things that cause sorrow, does not revel in petty, temporary things, conditioned things, imperfect things, limited by time, space and causation. Therefore, he is wise; he knows where lie peace and joy. He seeks to be wise at every step.”

Therefore, one would wisely recognise this central fact about the life of the seeker and aspirant: that while devotion is both necessary and good, it is wisdom which makes devotion fruitful in experience. Peace and joy come through devotion only if it is accompanied, supported and enlivened by knowledge and wisdom. Sri Ramakrishna said: “A devotee should not be foolish. Wisdom is the highest good, for it makes, devotion fruitful.”

Therefore, a seeker, an aspirant, a spiritual *sadhaka* is also a *jijnasu*. He ever seeks to dwell in knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is your great friend. Wisdom is your invaluable life’s companion. And knowledge and wisdom come

through *satsanga*, through *sadvichara*, right discrimination, right enquiry and observation of life. We learn wisdom through the folly of others, from observing life around us. A true seeker is a learner at every step. He advances in knowledge; he expands in wisdom. Thus by dwelling in wisdom, walking in the light of knowledge, he guarantees that his quest after bliss and peace is not futile, that it is crowned with fulfilment.

Therefore, ponder well this truth that wisdom is your friend, that knowledge is the highest good and that Brahman is knowledge—*satyam jnanam anantam brahma*. Again and again the Srimad Bhagavad Gita reiterates this point, that if you want to have true peace, true joy, if you want to make your *sadhana* successful, let it be accompanied by wisdom. Seek to cast out folly and to walk in the path of wisdom. For it is your greatest good; it is your greatest helper. It is a companion which will guide you in the right direction—knowledge and wisdom.

Not dry intellectualism, not vain rationality, too much of logic that goes on splitting, chopping—it is not this, but it is a higher thing, a higher quality. Mere dry rationality or intellectualism only becomes a burden. It is a trap; it boosts up one's ego. Therefore, a discriminating aspirant carefully avoids it. They call it lip-Vedanta. It is something that emanates from the brain. It is not the true, discriminating higher wisdom or understanding. It is a lesser thing that pertains to the ego.

One should know how to distinguish between spiritual knowledge and wisdom and dry intellectualism—sterile, splitting, chopping rationality. All rationality which springs out of the ego is unwise. That feeling that one knows everything is itself un wisdom. That spirituality becomes the opposite of knowledge, because it does not free you, it does not liberate you. It ties you down to your ego; it traps you and holds you fastly bound to your own ego.

Therefore, this lesser, dry intellectualism—which is the outcome of *rajas*, not *sattva*—you must know how to carefully distinguish it from higher spiritual knowledge which is always sattvic and accompanied by humility, by a clear understanding that one knows nothing, that one can walk the path of wisdom and knowledge only if the Supreme Being grants it, blesses us with it. So the truly wise person is never egoistic. This is the hallmark of wisdom.

A wise man has said: “What I know is like a few grains of sand on the ocean's shore. What I do not know is like the vast ocean itself.” So, be wise. Walk in the light of knowledge. Guard your humility, knowing that all knowledge comes from a supreme source higher than us. Living in wisdom, find peace. Walking in the light of knowledge, obtain the joy and the bliss that is your birthright.

May, thus, wisdom be your constant companion. May, thus, knowledge ever accompany your devotion, your spirituality. For, knowledge is your highest good and wisdom is the sure guarantee of your attaining the bliss that you are seeking, the peace that all people are ever seeking. Therefore recognise the place of wisdom and knowledge in your life and be blessed. God bless you!

The Folly Of Ego

Radiant Atman! We have been considering the desirability of being wise, the necessity of wisdom in order to attain the Supreme Being who is pure wisdom-consciousness. And the Guru functions as a source of illumining and enlightening wisdom. The last and ultimate message of Gurudev to mankind was: "Happiness is when the individual merges in God." This was the last sentence he wrote before he himself merged in the Supreme.

Therefore, the merging of the individual, the losing of the individual, is indicated as the supreme blessedness, the supreme wisdom. For the greatest folly is the ego, the greatest good is the renouncing and the losing of the ego. Again one has to reiterate: the answer to the question, "When shall I be free?" is, "When 'I' shall cease to be." Then shall I be free, when "I" shall cease to be.

In the eternal drama between light and darkness, the divine and the demoniacal, the demoniacal in countless scriptures has been represented as terrible ego—Ravana, Mahishasura, Hiranyakasipu. They were all terrible egos, undivine egos, who denied God, who defied even God. They were enraged at the very mention of anything divine. The Puranas, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana all bring out this mystical fact that the undivine is represented by hard ego.

Therefore, the great Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, being a wise teacher, mentioned the necessity of transcending the ego, of eliminating the ego, of renouncing the ego through the practice of humility, egolessness, through the desire to revere all beings knowing that the presence of God dwells in all beings and through the desire to serve, to give honour and reverence to all beings, seeing God in them.

The desirability of humility, of effacing the ego, being patient, forgiving, forbearing was summed up in his famous verse on the spiritual life and worship of God: *trinadapi sunichena tarorapi sahishnuna, amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih* (Being humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than the tree, free from vanity and being respectful to others, one should sing the glories of Lord Hari).

All this points to one fact: that ego is folly, and wisdom lies in renouncing and transcending the ego. "When shall I be free? When 'I' shall cease to be. Then shall I be free, when 'I' shall cease to be." Thus mystics and sages have drawn our attention to this one great truth of the spiritual life: that which stands

between the individual soul and the Universal Soul is the ego in all its aspects—the ethical aspect, the psychological aspect and the philosophical or metaphysical aspect—the sense of separatist individuality. They say that this is the barrier between man and God, between the human and the Divine, between the individual soul and the Universal Soul—this mysterious something which makes one feel I am the centre of the universe, all things are made for me, I am the most important thing.

To cherish this ego, to support it, to protect it, to fight for it, to wish to express it, demonstrate it, manifest it, at every moment—that is regarded by the individual as the highest necessity, the highest need. Ego is, therefore, the primary, fundamental value of the individual's way of approaching life, of the individual's attitude towards all things in life. The point of view, the ground, is ego; the attitude stems from ego. I, and the rest of the world, I, and all others—wherein I is more important than all others.

That is the individual-consciousness: ego-oriented, ego based, ego propelled, ego impelled. We are ready to perpetuate it. We protect it. For when one is not awakened, one thinks that the ego is the most important thing. And that is folly; that is not wisdom.

And this, therefore, is wisdom: to recognise that what stands between me and God is my ego, that what stands between bondage and liberation is ego. Ego is the screen, the *dehatma buddhi*, the *ahamkriti*, the *avarana*. And through meditation and *jnana* the *avarana* of this false sense of separation is to be removed. That is what Vedanta says. *Mala, vikshepa, avarana*—the essential impurity of the individual nature, the restless, oscillating tendency of the mind, and then the veil of ignorance in the form of the separate ego-sense.

Wisdom, therefore, is in recognising what is what, recognising the truth about the human situation, the truth about bondage. Why then do they say: "Where ignorance is bliss 'twere folly to be wise." Yes, if ignorance were bliss, wisdom would lie in not being wise. But, unfortunately, our experience, bitter experience, is that ignorance is the source of endless trouble. *Avidya, ajnana* is the source of endless trouble, bondage, the wheel of birth and death and *tapatraya*, the threefold afflictions.

The first of the four great truths expounded by Lord Buddha was the existence of pain and suffering. Therefore, we find that it is not bliss that the individual soul finds and experiences on earth but the contrary of it. And the great *jagat guru*, Adi Sankaracharya, says that this entire earth life is an ocean of grief and sorrow: *janma duhkham jara duhkham jaya duhkham punah punah; samsara sagaram duhkham tasmajagrata jagrata* (Repeatedly there is pain of birth, pain of old age, pain from wife and the painful ocean of worldly existence; therefore, wake up).

This ocean of *samsara* is *duhkha*, *duhkhalayam* (the abode of pain). Therefore, if ignorance were indeed bliss, it would certainly be folly to be wise. But we actually find that ignorance is the source of prolific sorrow, pain, suffering, complications and human clashes, conflicts, fights, quarrels, disharmony and discord. They all arise out of the folly of the ego. Therefore, if one has to live harmoniously as a family, a spiritual family, there is need to be wise and not to allow the ego to cause clash and conflict between one another.

Among equals there is always a sense of competition, wanting to get the better of the other. There is intolerance, envy and jealousy. This, being ego-based, is folly, and is always a source of suffering, the source of all problems. Being a seeker, a *sadhaka*, being in the life spiritual, being Yogis in the path of Yoga, one should be wise and awake to this truth—that my prime problem is my ego.

Therefore I should develop tolerance and friendliness towards my compatriots, my brethren in the spiritual family—not a sense of rivalry but a sense of friendliness—being very happy to eliminate my ego. *Maitri* (friendship), *karuna*, loving kindness, that was the great prescription of Lord Buddha—loving kindness. And Maharshi Patanjali, the expounder of Yoga, advocated *maitri*, loving friendliness, that puts an end to the competitive spirit, rivalry, envy and jealousy, which is a canker that destroys our peace of mind, makes us restless and agitated.

So, envy, jealousy and rivalry are folly, because we all seek happiness and peace. To take a contrary code of conduct that robs us of our peace and happiness—one could never say that it is wise. On the contrary, it is folly. We want something, but we work against it. That is foolishness; that is folly.

Therefore, to renounce the folly of the ego with its rivalry and competitiveness, envy and jealousy and to live in harmony, in peace, in loving kindness and friendliness is wisdom, is the greatest good. This is the teaching of all the sages and seers. Brotherhood, fraternity, belonging to one family means the ending of all envy and jealousy, competitiveness and rivalry. And this is possible only when the ego is recognised for what it is and it is renounced and one becomes wise. Immediately—harmony, peace, joy—everything comes flooding into one's life. One is at peace, peace with oneself and peace with others. And in peace there is joy. Egolessness is peace. Therefore, it is in wisdom that there is peace and joy. Wisdom is the great good.

Therefore, let us pray to the Lord “*jnana hamko dijiye* (Give us true knowledge and wisdom.)” Give us wisdom to walk the wise way, not the way of folly. Let us, therefore, seek and pray for knowledge and wisdom and be wise in our life, and thus be happy. One should work for one's own good and the good of all others. That is noble life.

Let us be wise on all levels. Let us be wise in the field of mutual relationships and day-to-day activities where we have to relate ourselves with many others. Let us be wise on the psychological level, understand ourselves and do the right thing. Let us be wise on the ethical level also. For the ego is unethical, it is immoral. It is a destroyer of the welfare of all, ours as well as others. Let us also be wise upon the metaphysical and philosophical level, which declares to us in categorical terms that the ego is the great source of sorrow, it is the great bondage. The individual soul is bound by the bondage of one's own ego.

Therefore, upon all levels let us be wise. Upon all levels let us do the right thing. Let us walk in the light of wisdom, understanding and practical knowledge. Let us, thus, eliminate clash and conflict, discord and disharmony, and live in peace and joy through wisdom at all levels.

Let us start this now by following the great adage, the great admonition of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Gauranga Mahaprabhu: "Being humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than the tree, free from vanity and being respectful to others, one should sing the glories of Lord Hari." He was supposed to be a *bhakta* filled with divine emotion, sublime spiritual sentiment, yet he uttered words of deep philosophical wisdom when he gave this prescription for the spiritual life and spiritual practice.

He was a wise teacher. He was a great healer of souls. He was a great divine physician. Therefore, let us honour his memory. Let us pay homage to Gauranga Mahaprabhu by taking his admonition to heart. Let us reflect over its meaning for us and follow its instructions by being egoless and engaging in spiritual *sadhana*. This is the highest way we can pay reverence to the lofty memory of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Thus let us be wise.

God bless you all to ponder well this great insight into the life spiritual given to us by all sages and seers and by Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji also: "*abhimān tyāgo, sevā karo* (Give up pride and do service). *Amanitvam, adambhitvam* (humility, unpretentiousness)," says the Gita. May the grace of Gurudev, the choicest benedictions of Gauranga Mahaprabhu (Lord Krishna Chaitanya) and all the sages and seers ever be with you in your noble spiritual life and your earnest and sincere spiritual practices. This is my prayer at the feet of the Lord and the saints.

Booklet Five

"The quintessence of Advaita Vedanta sadhana is to affirm the truth and reality of your essential, eternal, divine identity and to resolutely reject the error of thinking of yourself as a finite human creature."

—Swami Chidananda



Your Real Problem

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of Light assembled in Gurudev's spiritual presence in this sacred Samadhi Hall! May the divine grace of the supreme Eternal Reality, the one reality behind ever-changing names and forms, enable you to become firmly established in the noble ideals and divine principles that you have adopted for living your chosen way of life and in the lofty spiritual qualities which are required and are indispensably necessary to become firmly established in the sublime spiritual life. May His divine grace enable you to develop the inner spiritual strength necessary to cultivate successfully the noble divine qualities, *daivi sampada*, like *sama*, *dama*, *titiksha*, *uparati*, *sraddha* and *samadhana* (calmness of mind, control of senses, endurance, self-withdrawal, faith and proper concentration), like *viveka*, *vairagya* and *mumukshutva* (discrimination, dispassion and a burning desire for liberation), like the qualities of *ahimsa*, *satyam* and *brahmacharya*.

And may the grace of Gurudev make it possible for you to not only be firmly established in these sublime divine qualities, but also to effectively apply them in living your day-to-day life, in your daily thinking, feeling, speech and actions. May Gurudev's *guru-kripa* grant you the insight and wisdom to effectively adhere to and apply these noble principles and divine qualities in your relationship with life around you, with your fellow beings whom you have to deal with in the practical living of your life in the *vyavaharic* field.

Idealism is one thing. Idealism becoming a living force in your day-today life, in your being and doing, in the manner in which you relate yourself to your fellow beings in the field of daily *vyavahara*, that becomes another thing. That becomes practical idealism. That becomes applied divinity, *daivi sampada* in action. This is more difficult because it encounters various adverse factors and obstacles. It also encounters the formidable obstacle of your mind's refusal to

give way to higher principles in preference to lesser principles. This is because the mind sometimes has its own attachments, whims and fancies, and it has fallen in love with certain lesser ways of expressing itself. It clings to them; it does not want to leave them.

There is an essential unwillingness of the mind to change, sometimes obstinacy, sometimes even obduracy. Therefore, great wisdom, earnestness and sincere application are necessary in order to bring the mind around, recreate it and to cultivate in ourselves a new mind. It is a regeneration. Gurudev used a significant phrase in one song: “Die to live.” The old has to die and give place to the new in your interior. It is in dying to the little self that one attains to everlasting life.

It is a very difficult task. You can suppress the mind. You can repress it. You can keep it in check. But to make it die, so that it forever leaves off its old inveterate tendencies and consents to become totally new, that is very difficult task. For the mind is always propelled by a basic delusion, a basic ignorance. A Hindi *bhajan* contains the line: “*Man mari, maya na mari*—I thought I had killed my mind, but I had not yet killed my delusion, my *maya*, my spiritual ignorance. Therefore I found that the mind is still there. It appeared to be dead, but it is still there, because it is propelled from my inside by this great illusory and delusory force.”

In his song of “Eighteen Ities,” Gurudev says “Brahman is the only real entity,” and follows it immediately by saying “Mr. So and So is a false non-entity.” As long as one does not overcome the deluded notion that “I am important, I am something, I am someone,” unless you realise and become convinced that Mr. So and So, your “I” within, your little personality consciousness, your distinctive ego-consciousness, is a false non-entity, then it is very difficult to really start living the divine life.

For we still cling to that within us which is not the Divine, which is the outcome of *bhramanti* (error), the outcome of *avidya*, of *ajnana*. *Dehatma buddhi* (considering the body as the Atman) gives rise to this false ego-principle of a distinctive, separate, individual human personality consciousness. It is the *adhyasa* (superimposition), the proximity of the *suddha chaitanya tattva* (pure consciousness principle) which is your *nija svarupa* (own true nature) with the *jada tattva* (insentient principle) that goes to make up your *prakriti* that is your earthly self.

It is this proximity that has given rise to this ego-principle which is, at the moment, the most important thing in the whole world. Even though it is a nothing, even though it constitutes your bondage, your essential darkness, your *prapancha* and *samsara*, your greatest problem and affliction, yet such is the tremendous power of *maya* that she makes you regard it as the most important thing to be treasured and supported, to be carefully preserved and nurtured.

From morning till evening we are doing nothing but taking care of it, trying to see that it is not in any way assailed or hurt. We do everything to keep it permanently there, whereas we should see clearly that it is our greatest problem. It indeed constitutes our true problem, the central problem of our spiritual life.

And if you psychologically investigate ego-consciousness, analyse it, pursue it and begin to find out, then psychologically also, you will find it to be the kingpin of all troubles, the clashes and conflicts, the fights and quarrels, the bitterness and hatreds. But then, one does not wish to do this keen critical analysis of one's inner personality structure. For the ego is the essence of it. It is the prop of the personality. It is the ridge-pole of this life. And if the ridge-pole is taken away, the whole tent will collapse. There will be nowhere for you to reside.

So, therefore, it is always maintained. Great importance is given to it. Yet it is our affliction. *Ahamkriti* (egoism) is our *badha* (hindrance). It is our *bhavaroga* (disease of transmigration and worldly existence). It is the main affliction from which we are suffering. But we do not know that it is the source of our suffering. We think that it will protect us from all suffering. We rely upon it. We depend upon it to maintain our integrity.

Everyone knows the great adage: "Then shall I be free, when I shall cease to be," but we do not recognise its truth, its validity and its importance. We do not recognise its worth in our life, its central place in our *sadhana*. So we know everything, yet we live in ignorance. We have all the knowledge, yet we cling to ignorance. That is why we weep and wail, we fight and quarrel. We bring upon ourselves various types of afflictions, frustrations, disappointments, disillusionments, sorrows and griefs, not knowing that the key is simple. We can rise above all of them if we refuse to give importance to this ego-consciousness, this "so and so" false non-entity and become established in the truth of our being.

Yet, even though this is said a hundred times, we fail to recognise this truth. That is why Lord Krishna says: "*daivi hyesha gunamayi mama maya duratyaya* (Verily, this divine illusion of Mine, made up of the three qualities of nature, is difficult to cross over)." Difficult it is to understand, for it is so subtle, so elusive, so effective, that knowing, yet one does not know. One lives in ignorance. Seeing, yet one does not perceive. One still remains blind. Hearing, yet one does not really understand. One pays no attention to what one hears. Therefore, even though hearing, one still fails to understand what is being said.

This is the subtle workings of *maya*, which wants to preserve this personality, which deserves to be liquidated and not preserved. Yet its preservation is the most important business of life for the vast number of individuals that go to make up human society. Fortunate indeed are the microscopic few who clearly recognise that our main problem is ourselves, that our *prapancha* lies within us, our *samsara* lies within us, our bondage lies within us, not outside. Others are not our problem. We are more our problem than all

others put together. This indeed is to be pondered, to be grasped, to be understood and known, and this indeed has to be dealt with one day or another, if you are to transcend yourself and attain your true status, your divine identity. One day it has to be done. Until that time, we shall still be carefully nourishing and preserving our problems, we shall be carefully perpetuating our bondage and protecting our troubles.

Think deeply. cursory reflection will not take you into that which alone can make you realise the truth of the reality. It is only deep thinking that will bring you face to face with this central truth of your present situation, that you are presently established in a limited, separate human consciousness, a “so and so” consciousness, “such and such” consciousness. Deep reflection will be necessary to realise the actual nature of your present consciousness, deep and constant reflection.

Therefore, we invoke the grace of the Divine and the benedictions of holy beings like Holy Master, to enable us to become well aware of the state of our inner consciousness, to enable us to deal with the situation the way it is, and become established in our true Self, to rise and go beyond our lesser self and to make our ground a dimension of our true Self, our divinity.

Then alone divine life starts. Then alone divine life is possible. Otherwise, *maya* deludes us into thinking that we have already lifted our consciousness into a higher plane, while keeping us firmly established in our plane of the I-consciousness. So it is difficult to understand the very subtle workings of *maya* unless we are constantly after Her with in-depth thinking, reflection and reasoning. Therefore they say, you must have keen, actively-exercised discrimination as your constant companion day by day. Great is the need to supplement our devotion with keen, analytical, critical reasoning. *Bhakti*, *jnana* and *vairagya*—all three have to go together.

We are celebrating the birth anniversary of one of the greatest spiritual personalities of India, who had within himself an abundant measure of *bhakti* and *jnana* as well as *vairagya*. So his name has become immortal. Sri Krishna Chaitanya Gauranga Mahaprabhu was a supreme devotee of the highest state of *bhakti*. But at the same time, he was a very strictly rational, logical and keenly analytical personality. And due to the combination of these two, he became established in the highest type of *vairagya*, supreme *vairagya*. If you study his life, you will be astounded to see in his personality a rare confluence of the highest *bhakti*, highest *jnana* and highest *vairagya*.

He, who lived more than 500 years ago and is the inspirer of the Hare Krishna movement, the Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya (sect), is indeed a great ideal. He perfectly realised the falsity and nothingness of his little ego-consciousness and at one stroke was able to cast away all ambition and all his love for learning and rationality. He had been an outstanding scholar and a

towering intellect. But due to his great insight and great spiritual awakening within, he was able to put away his ambition and scholarship and conquer the ego—a very difficult task indeed. If you have conquered the ego, you have conquered *samsara*, you have conquered *prapancha*, you have overcome bondage, you have liberated yourself.

“Then shall I be free when I shall cease to be.” This “I” which is so dear to everyone, which is the most important thing in the whole world for everyone, which one does not want to let go of, it is this that really constitutes your problem and it creates problems for others also.

And it is to solve this problem that all philosophies have come up. All the great Acharyas, Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Vallabhacharya, Nimbarkacharya, etc., all the great teachers, Guru Nanak, Zoroaster, Jesus, Buddha, have laboured only in order to teach us, to enable us to overcome this little “I”. It is inveterate and very difficult indeed to recognise in its true colours. All the philosophies exist only in order to debunk this “I”. All systems and schools of philosophy exist to make us see this truth clearly, that “I” is your real problem. It is not an easy joke. You have to become a real philosopher, you have to become a real Yogi, you have to become a real Vairagi, you have to become a real Viveki, in order to recognise this subtlest of all subtle truths.

God bless you. God’s grace is necessary. Guru’s Kripa is necessary and our willingness to face facts is necessary. Our willingness to recognise the truth when we see it, is necessary. It is the third important necessity. May you be endowed with all three!

Let Idealism Be Born In The Human Heart

Adorable Divine Presence, Thou Who art the one all-pervading, ever-present Reality behind the ever-changing, vanishing names and forms that constitute this world appearance, this projected phenomenon in time and space! Adorable Divine Presence, Thou Who art without and within and everywhere, Thou Who art interconnected in the innermost cells of our body, Thou Who art the Eye of our eyes, the Ear of our ears, the Breath of our breath, the Mind of our mind, the Heart of our heart, the Prana of our prana, the very Soul of our soul, Thou Who art seated within us as our own inner, eternal being, bless us dear Lord that we may ever be aware of Your Presence! This is all we ask of Thee: that we should never lose the awareness that we live, move and have our being in Thy glorious, holy, sacred Divine Presence and that our life is lived in You.

May there be peace in the whole world. May there be harmony and oneness between individuals, communities and nations. May there be peace in the East and the West, peace in the North and the South, and peace all over the universe. Give us this day the guidance necessary to make this day a fit and

worthy offering at Thy Feet. Let this day be lived with noble deeds, sublime feelings and with right understanding, good intentions and pure thoughts.

Beloved and worshipful Gurudev, thou who has granted to us once again the grace of being in your spiritual presence at this early morning hour, bless all your children, who are gathered together here in this sacred Samadhi Hall of your holy Ashram! Bless them that their eyes are opened and from darkness they may see light. Remove spiritual blindness and grant them all divine sight.

Bless them all that they may grasp the message of these past nine days and the reason why our ancients had ordained that a new year commences with nine days of continuous worship, adoration and prayerfulness. For nine is the fullest number beyond which numbers cease and then combinations start, all permutations and combinations of this mystical culminating figure of nine. For this nine days, our ancients wisely ordained that we observe a period of fast, prayer, worship, adoration, chanting of the Divine Name and reading of the scriptures. Thus they gave us unmistakable direction that the full year should be filled with worship, adoration and diligent reading of the scriptures, so that we get guidance upon the pathway of life through the wisdom teachings contained in the scripture and so that the air should be filled with devotion, worship, prayerfulness and all that is conducive to the highest human welfare here and hereafter.

What a great love for mankind our ancient had! What a great concern for posterity they harboured in their hearts! Through their universal love and compassion they made this provision for these nine days, so that we may know how to live our life in order that the whole year may be a great step in our spiritual evolution towards divine perfection, illumination and ultimate liberation. How can we ever repay this debt of gratitude they have put us into by this great wisdom, this great consideration for our highest welfare!

Radiant Atman! What are your thoughts about the way in which the year has commenced that you have been blessed to participate in? Have you reflected upon it? Have you tried to understand its meaning and the depth of its significance? Have you tried to grasp the message it has for you and your life, what it seeks to convey to you? Or have you, like millions of other people in India, just passed through it mechanically, in a routine manner, as a habit, because it is a tradition? Or have you tried to understand it in a special way, because you are a special group of people who have chosen the spiritual path, who have made God-realisation the goal of your life?

You are *sadhakas*, you are seekers. You are expected to be full of *vichara*, full of *viveka*, spiritual enquiry, spiritual discrimination, and *jijnasa*, a keen hunger for Knowledge. Therefore, in your special capacity as *jijnasus*, *mumukshus*, *sadhakas*, spiritual people and try to understand the message that Vasanta Navaratri has for you. Otherwise, it will have come and gone and you will be where you are and what you were before. That was not the purpose with

which these great sacraments and occasions of worship were instituted. They were instituted with a different purpose—that they may awaken you from time to time, inspire you, give you the right guidance, point out to you the direction in which you must go. All this and more is contained in these great occasions set up for us by our illumined ancestors.

We bemoan the condition of the world, the condition of present-day mankind. We regret the deterioration in the individual's character. But we seldom try to see wherein lies the cause, wherein lies the reason for this that we bemoan, this that we regret. We seldom seek to know why this has come about or how it can be corrected. We seldom seek to know.

Gossip is just talking about things one sees and hears. But serious deliberation and discussion takes into consideration why these things are happening, what are the cause or causes, how can they be remedied? And What can *I do* as a contemporary individual in today's society in order to remove the causes? What can *I do*? What can be my contribution? This is deliberation. This is not gossip.

And Gurudev has given us the key: "As a man thinketh, so he becometh." Thought leads to action. Action is the outer manifestation of the thought that has arisen in the mind. A person thinks something and then does what this thought impels. Thought is the origin of all human conduct, all human behaviour, all human actions, the world over. Thought is the key, it is the source of human life and conduct, of human action and reaction and interaction also. If thought is properly taken care of, then everything that results from it will also be properly taken care of. You sow a thought and reap an action. If you continue to sow such an action, you will reap a habit. Such habits repeated bring about character, and your future destiny depends upon your present character. At the root of it all is thought, what we think. Thought leads to action, action leads to habit, habit leads to character and character decides destiny.

Therefore, what is to be done? We have just completed the Vasanta Navaratri, where after nine days of continuous reading of the *avatara lila* of the *maryada purushottama* Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra, we have celebrated the birth of Lord Rama, Ramajanma. Do you not see the significance of it? Clearly what is indicated is that the very purpose for which we devoutly read the scripture is that the ideal of Rama may be born in our heart. This is the only solution to the disease of sorrow, conflict, clash, immorality, impurity and *asuric* conduct that prevails in the world today. That is the only solution, the only right remedy, the only right key.

Constantly there should be a renewal of the human heart. Noble thoughts should be generated. Sublime ideas and sublime motivations should be created in the hidden interior of the human heart and mind. Then alone the human world will change, human conduct will change, human character will assume new,

sublime dimensions; man will become different, what he is destined to be, divine, a child of God. It will not be possible unless we bring about a revolution in our thoughts, unless we make idealism to be born in our hearts every moment, every day.

Let idealism be born each day in the human heart. Let idealism be born again and again in the human heart. That is the one way. All other efforts are bound to fail if this fundamental process is not initiated in the human nature, in the human mind, in the human heart. An abandonment of base, wicked thoughts and a deliberate encouragement and determined attempt to bring about a sowing of sublime thoughts, great thoughts, noble intentions and pure motivations, is indeed the key. Let idealism be born in the human heart every moment each day.

If the inner man is ideal, if the mind thinks sublime thoughts and ideas, if the heart harbours noble emotions, if these intentions are at the back of each action, then the human being will behave like a true human being; he will begin to live like a God on earth. Then alone a new era will dawn for man and mankind in the human world. For the key lies in what the human mind thinks and in what feelings and sentiments the human heart harbours. And this can be of the highest, sublimest, holiest quality only if idealism is kept alive in the human heart.

When idealism vanishes, darkness envelops the human world. Man's interior, the mind, becomes a dark factory for the manufacture of ignoble thoughts, dire thoughts. Man then creates a hell upon earth, he creates his own undoing, his downward descent. The key lies, therefore, in taking every care, taking great care about how the mind functions, how it behaves, what thoughts it generates and what are the quality of those thoughts. Idealism alone can keep these thoughts lofty, noble and sublime. In this way only will man become a source of all that is auspicious and blessed. All other solutions will be symptomatic solutions, patching-up symptoms, not eradicating the root cause.

Therefore, let idealism be born in the human heart every day. This is the great significance and the message of the *jayanti* of Lord Rama who was the ideal divine human individual, human character. Reflect deeply over this facet, this angle, this aspect of what you have just now gone through. Know that its message is: Let idealism be born in the human heart each day, freshly, newly, vigorously. This is the solution to the problem of human character, human conflict and human unhappiness created by human thought, the wrong type of thought, human error, and not doing the right thing to bring about a change.

You have been told. An indication has been given about the solution. Now it is up to you—*yathe'cchasi tatha kuru*—it is up to you to make use of the solution or not. If you want to see a better world, a better humanity, a better future for the world, there is but one way: Let idealism, lofty, noble, sublime idealism, ethical and spiritual idealism, humanitarian idealism be born in the human heart each day, every moment.

Our human thought is the key to human destiny. *Srotavya, mantavya, nididhyasitavya*—this is to be heard, reflected upon and pondered deeply. God bless you!

The Key To Your Transformation

Radiant Atman! The words *aviveki*, *viveki* and *sadhaka* refer to three different types of individuals. An *aviveki* is a person who does not discriminate. All the lessons in life which God sends him or her are wasted, because he or she is in *ajnana* (ignorance). And *ajana* is the outcome of *aviveka* (non-discrimination).

On the other hand, a *viveki* is a person who does discriminate. He learns the lessons of life, but they have no effect on him. His learning and the lessons he has learned are stored up in his head; they produce no fruit because they are not applied. He does not allow these lessons to have a powerful impact upon him.

But a true *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) is one who is both a *viveki* as well as one who actively reacts to whatever lessons life brings in the course of going through it, the experiences that form part of it. Nothing is wasted upon the true *sadhaka*. Everything produces a change, a transformation for the better. Everything brings forth from the true *sadhaka* and seeker a certain positive, creative response, after which he is never the same as before. He is changed. His character, his nature, his very life becomes enriched, enhanced by something new which was not there previous to the impact the experience had upon him.

Two hundred years ago, there was born a grandchild, a baby girl, in the family of a very renowned Japanese warrior, a *samurai*. He was a great warrior, very brave and heroic. And the baby girl was a most beautiful child. She grew up to be a maiden of such exceptional and unusual beauty that the family thought it fitting that she be offered to the Empress of the country as a handmaiden or servant.

At that time the Japanese were ruled by emperors. So they took her to the palace and the Empress and the entire royal family were also struck by the beauty of this girl. She was found to be very keenly intelligent, very active and very perceptive. So she soon became a favourite and an important part of the Empress' retinue.

Unfortunately, within a few years, while the girl was still in her teens, the Empress, whose health had been apparently perfectly normal, suddenly passed away. This sudden passing had such a profound impact upon this young girl that something stirred deep within her and a sudden change came into her entire

psychology. She said: "What is this life? Everything is vain. Everything passes away. There is no stability; nothing can be relied upon. Nothing is real. Everything is evanescent, transitory, ephemeral, perishable and passing."

She was very intelligent person, and so profound was this conviction that she lost all interest in life and determined then and there: "I must pursue the path of meditation and enlightenment." She determined to become a Zen nun, a seeker and a meditator.

Everyone was shocked. Her whole family was in an uproar. They said: "Impossible! It is against our family tradition. You are too young for this; you are unprepared. You must marry. Moreover, it will not be possible for you to be a nun having such great beauty as God has endowed you with." She yielded to them upon one strict condition—that after she had mothered three children, the marriage agreement would be at an end she would then become a nun. No one believed that such a thing would be possible and so they readily agreed and arranged a match for her. She also told her future husband and in-laws the same thing—that only on this condition would she be willing to enter into wedlock.

All agreed and so she was married. Dutifully she served her husband and in-laws, took a full interest in family affairs, looked after the household and behaved in a one hundred per cent normal way. But, at the same time she was a keen student of Zen literature and practised meditation. Still, in all ways she was an efficient house-wife, a good wife, and obedient daughter-in-law and a good daughter to her parents.

However, after the third child had been born and reared for a few months, she suddenly announced that her promise had been fulfilled. She would no longer continue in the family life and instead would take to the life of a Zen nun. In spite of all protests, she shaved her head and silenced them with a reminder of their promise.

She then left everything, put on a nun's robe and wandered away in search of a Zen master. She went to a great city where a famous master was and asked to be taken in discipleship. She was refused due to her beauty. She went to another master where she was also refused on the ground of her beauty.

Therefore, she determined that this obstacle should be removed. So, one day, in the privacy of her room she made a big fire, put a iron rod into it and branded her face. She made her face ugly beyond recognition and thus lost her beauty forever. She then went back to the second master who immediately accepted her as a disciple. She soon became a very earnest and sincere practitioner of the Zen way of life and advanced spiritually in an amazing manner.

Such was her determination. And it was all due to the way in which she was able to react when confronted by the sudden death of her patron, the

Empress. Of the hundreds of others who must have been in the service of the palace and the Empress, some would have wept, mourned for some time and then adjusted themselves. Others might have been thoughtful and reflected and for some time had some *smasana vairagya* (graveyard dispassion). They might have stopped wearing ornaments or good clothes. But soon they too would have reverted to normal, back to square one, as they say, or into the old rut. But here was one who was not only not an *aviveki*, not only not ignorance, not only not merely a *viveki*, but was one who was also practical, who had the *viveka* and immediately applied it to her own life.

Similar indeed was the case of Prince Siddhartha. He was a *uttama adhikari* (best qualified aspirant), a practical spiritual seeker, who was ripe to react to the experiences of life in a creative and transforming manner. And that was what made him first a renunciate, a *tyagi*, then a *tapasvi*, then a Yogi, then a *jnani*, then an enlightened Guru, an *uttama tattvavetta* (one who fully knows the truth) and finally a world teacher. And the whole world has benefited. Because he was a *uttama adhikari*, he did not go through life's experiences blindly with eyes closed, in a state of ignorance, in a state of non-discrimination and non-enquiry, *avichara* and *aviveka*. Nor did he merely go as an intellectual *vicharavan* and *viveki*.

Intellectually we may make enquiries, come to conclusions, learn things and then do nothing about it. So we are only burdened with knowledge. Life is left untouched. But Prince Siddhartha was a practical spiritual seeker, and he reacted to even simple ordinary experiences which leave millions of others just cold. Everyone has seen old age; everyone has seen disease; everyone has seen death. They are seen but nothing happens.

It is only when metal is touched by a philosopher's stone that it becomes gold. If clay or wood comes into contact with a philosopher's stone, it will remain clay or wood only. If a person of metal comes in contact with even day-to-day experiences, he will be transformed. Siddhartha was a person of metal; he had the right stuff in him. And this beautiful Japanese girl also had the right stuff in her. There was something there ready to absorb, to react, to get transformed. And, therefore, a transformation took place.

Today is Sri Buddha Jayanti. You should, therefore, ponder Buddha's life, his ideal reaction to experiences and the memorable and epoch-making step that he took. When he felt this profound change, he did not keep quiet about it. He was a practical Yogi. He took a bold step and became a renunciate and a seeker. Then he became an austere practitioner, a *tapasvi*, practised Yoga and meditation and became a *jnani* and a world teacher.

The great poet Sir Edwin Arnold has written about him in wonderful, inspiring poetry, *The Light of Asia*. And a very readable and most absorbing biography of Buddha was written by Adam Beck. Then Professor Edwin Burt

from Cornell University near New York has written *Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*. It is worthwhile purchasing a copy and studying it. During the late forties, Professor Burtt stayed in this Ashram for two or three weeks during a visit to India and Nepal. He gave a series of talks on comparative religion before Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji.

So, it is not what the *jiva* keeps experiencing in this life that really enriches it or transforms it and lifts it up to sublime heights, rather it is actively exercised *vichara* and *viveka*. More than that, for even this is not sufficient, it is how one reacts in a living manner, in a vital manner to experiences. It is this that becomes the transforming factor in the life of a true seeker.

This is so not only in the spiritual field but also in the secular field, even in the business field. If a businessman's son goes on like a fool, he will never learn anything. The same son, if he is not a fool but a keen observer, may learn many lessons about the business world, but if he does not react to them, he will not be successful. It is only the one who keenly absorbs these experiences, reflects deeply over them, applies the lessons learned and brings about changes, it is only such a one that becomes a successful business person and perhaps a multi-millionaire. It all depends upon whether one vitally and in a living manner reacts to the experiences that one undergoes. It is that which determines one's transformation in life.

That is what the life of Buddha teaches us. He reacted in a wonderful manner, in a living manner, very early in life. Thus it was that at a young age he became a great enlightened and illumined teacher of his own times and has gone down as an immortal personality in human history. Even though it is well over 2500 years since he was born, even today his teachings are followed by millions of Buddhists. And the world also remembers him, both East and West.

That is the result of the living way in which he faced life, underwent experiences and responded to them in a living way. May this be well absorbed. May this be deeply pondered. That is the benefit of observing such occasions as Buddha Jayanti. May you all try to make this a period of special study of Buddha's life, his teachings and what they imply, what message they have for us. May we become enriched by his lofty and sublime example, life and teachings. God bless you all!

Affirm Truth, Reject Untruth

Radiant Atman! This week we will observe the *jayanti* of Adi Sankaracharya, one of the greatest of Self-realised souls and philosophers this world of ours has produced. Leaving home, in a spirit of renunciation and aspiration to realise the Reality, at the tender age of eight years, he completed an unbelievable mission in the span of just a few years, passing away in his 32nd year. During that period he did what is known as *digvijaya* (conquest of the

quarters), carrying the banner of Advaita Vedanta, the supreme philosophy of absolute monism, into the four corners of India and overcoming all lesser schools of philosophy through his convincing, irrefutable arguments. His incredible work remains dynamically living, active and ever progressive even to this day, more than 1200 years after he propounded his doctrine.

The quintessence of Advaita Vedanta is to affirm the truth and reality of your essential, eternal, divine identity and to resolutely reject the error of thinking of yourself as a finite human creature having a name and form, beginning and end, and subject to changes such as birth, death, old age, disease, decay, pain, sorrow, suffering, etc. Resolutely rejecting this error and simultaneously affirming your eternal, unchangeable divine identity is the centre of Advaita Vedanta *sadhana*. They call it affirming and rejecting, *pushtikarana* and *nirakarana*—*neti, neti*.

Sankara's most popular work, Vivekachudamani, is a call to discrimination between the Self and non-Self—*atma-anatma viveka*. *Atma* is *sat* (existence absolute). *Anatma* is appearance only, temporary in time, limited in space, perishable; it is *kshara purusha* (perishable being). *Atma* is *akshara purusha* (imperishable being)—*ajo nityah sasvato'yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire* (Unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient, the Self is not killed when the body is killed). Thus the Vivekachudamani is a discourse, a treatise and a *sadhana* on discrimination between the Self and the non-Self.

And a second work of his, Atma Bodha, is a light upon what the Self is. As you discriminate between the Self and the non-Self, you get a good knowledge of what the non-Self is, so you can reject it; you will not be deluded by it. You can free yourself from the veil of delusion by knowing the nature of *anatman*. And then, to be rooted in the Reality, to be fixed in it firmly, to be able to think, reflect and meditate upon it and to awaken the correct awareness within your consciousness, a thorough study of what the Self is of great importance and value. To that end, Atma Bodha can be the way that God can gradually answer your prayer, "*tamasoma jyotir gamaya*" and "*dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*" ("From darkness lead me unto light" and "May He illumine our intellects").

To avoid that which is wrong, we have to get a knowledge of what wrong is; and to pursue and practice that which is right, we have the need to have a knowledge and a grasp of what right is, of what Reality and Truth is. Thus both the negative and positive and positive aspects of Vedantic admonition are of equal importance in making the mind aware of its error and to make the intellect grasp the truth.

When Brahman is the reality to be attained, why unnecessarily know about the world, *prapancha*, *samsara*? The answer is that because you want to free yourself from the delusion of the world, you must know the tricks of this

deluding appearance. Indeed, you must know everything about it, because it comes in numerous subtle ways.

We think the world is outside us, but, by and large, the world or *prapancha* or *samsara* is within us. We have to understand that. What is it within us that makes us regard *prapancha* to be real and makes us move towards it, get attached to it, get bound by it? What is it within us? That has to be rooted out, eradicated first. Thus the study of *avidya* or *maya* within is the key to freeing ourselves from delusion and rising from darkness to light.

Gurudev again and again reiterated: “Thou art immortal Soul. Thou art not this body nor this mind. They are *upadhis*, limiting adjuncts temporarily added on to you. They are there as part of your lesser personality, your earth consciousness, but you are also there far beyond them, transcending them, a divine personality, a supra-human spiritual reality, untouched by time and space, not bothered by pain, sorrow and suffering.”

This, then, is to be heard, reflected upon and meditated upon. May you direct all your attention to the practice of this truth which shall make you free. For it is this truth that arouses in us our kinship with the eternal, universal Reality, *paramatman*. May the grace of the Lord grant you success in this *sadhana* of being what you really are and of resisting the pull of the lower mind to make you imagine that you are something other than this Reality.

Constantly you have to reject the attempts of the mind and its age-old, inveterate tendencies to keep itself tied down to a lower level of ignorance and mistaken identity. It should be given no quarter. By the strength of your will power, your positive, awakened consciousness and your resolute and determined *sankalpa* to attain realisation in this very body, you must keep this process up. You must shine with an effulgent inner awareness of your own essential, immortal and imperishable divine identity. Your interior should be a mass of effulgence, of *jnana prakasa*. There should be a state of *jnana bodha* within, a state of wakefulness within—no slumber. For this you must pray, and for this you must practise.

May this week be permeated by the spirit of Jagat Guru Adi Sankaracharya, the Advaita Acharya, and may it have the effect of successfully lifting up your consciousness from the present, ordinary, humdrum human level of earth consciousness into a lofty, sublime higher spiritual level of a divine spiritual consciousness!

Booklet Six

"All life is sacred. Therefore, deal reverently with all beings. Honour the sanctity, purity, holiness of each and ever living being. The living presence of God in all beings should be the basis of our attitude and behaviour towards others, our approach to the world."

-Sri Swami Chidananda



True Sanyasa

Beloved and worshipful Gurudev! Homage unto thy glorious and gracious spiritual presence, thou who art the light, the life and the soul of this Ashram that you have created upon this holy spot on the right bank of Divine Mother Ganga in sacred Uttarkhand! Fortunate are we to gather together in this sacred Samadhi Hall during this early morning hour of quietness and to enter into silent spiritual fellowship with souls whom you have drawn by the power of your inspiration and divine wisdom teachings.

Most fortunate are those who visit this place. Most fortunate indeed are those who are able to spend some time doing *anushtana japa*, and most fortunate indeed are those thrice blessed souls who dwell with you and live the life divine. I bow to your presence and invoke thy glance of grace, *kripa-kataksha*, upon all those assembled here. I pray that thy *guru-kripa* and choicest blessings may enable them to lead the life sublime, to lead a life of *tyaga* and *tapasya*, *nivritti* and *sannyasa*, *bhakti* and *bhajan*, self-control and discipline, concentration and meditation, a life of active enquiry, discrimination and analysis, a life of introspection, reflection and contemplation, a divine life of truth, purity, compassion and kindness, a divine life of service, devotion, meditation and aspiration for Self-realisation.

May this be your special gift on this day, June 1, the anniversary of your *sannyasa*, your renunciation. In 1924 you came here as a lone wanderer, not knowing the language of this part of the land, not knowing the customs prevailing here and unfamiliar with the experiences of extreme heat and extreme cold. You had but one thought, to be in seclusion, in silence, and to chant the Name of God, pray to Him and attain realisation.

Blessed is that day, for out of that renunciation of yours, out of your embracing the monastic order, has sprung up a monastic family of effulgent *tyagis*, effulgent monks filled with a light of a higher awareness, a higher consciousness, benefiting others by this inner light that they have acquired by their contact with you. Blessed is that day, for it has given rise to this great, noble edifice of Divine Life, of Yoga-Vedanta, of practical spiritual *sadhana*, in this age of materialism, scepticism, atheism and hedonism.

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved fellow seekers after the Eternal Reality! We were considering the need to awaken, unfold and activate the latent, dormant spiritual *samskaras*, the spiritual impressions and the latent tendencies, spiritual inclinations, *vasanas*, carried over from past births. Otherwise they will remain dormant without fructifying.

A number of years back, in Egypt, when one of the tombs of a young pharaoh was opened, they discovered beside his mummy many seeds of grain left there by the ruler's loyal subjects. The archaeologists were fired with an intense curiosity: "Will these seeds sprout? Are they still holding the life principle after lying here for thousands of years?" So, with great anticipation they planted them. And lo and behold when the seeds were watered and given the right conditions for germination, they soon sprouted forth and grew into shoots of grain. Civilisations had come and gone, kingdoms had risen and fallen, but in these seeds entombed with the young pharaoh, life remained dormant ready to sprout forth given the right conditions.

Even so, we have considered how *samskaras* and *vasanas*, impressions and latent tendencies, will ever lie latent and dormant, without effectively making their appearance felt as part of our life, without becoming dynamically active, vigorously expressed and manifested in our own nature, until and unless they are made to sprout forth, awaken, put forth their fruits, by bringing to bear upon them a keen aspiration, a great desire, an intense longing, a fervent yearning for spiritual unfoldment, spiritual growth, spiritual realisation—*subheccha*, *mumukshutva* and *jijnasa*.

Such was the intensity of aspiration that burned in the heart of young Dr. Kuppaswami when he turned his face north towards the Himalayas and the Ganga and walked the length of India, arriving here towards the end of 1923. He had an intense longing, an all-consuming desire in the heart, a desire implanted by God, which is part of God's nature, *vidya maya*. *Dharmaviruddho bhuteshu kamo'smi bharatarshabha* (In all beings I am desire unopposed to *dharma*, O Arjuna).

It is such desire that liberates. It is such desire that awakens. It is such desire that brings into dynamism latent tendencies and dormant spiritual *samskaras*. It is like a flame being applied to a combustible material which will otherwise ever remain dull and cold like any other thing around it. It is only when

a flame is applied to it that it immediately bursts forth into a blaze full of radiance, full of heat, full of the power to consume, to reduce to ash anything that comes into contact with it. That power comes when it is awakened, made to manifest in an active way.

That was what happened. Dr. Kuppuswami's heart was afire for Self-realisation, for *brahma-jnana*, to become a *jivanmukta*, to have the peace that passeth understanding, to have the *sukham-atyantikam yattad-buddhigrahyam-atindriyam* (endless bliss beyond the senses that may only be grasped by the pure intellect), *paramananda* (supreme bliss) which gives *nityatripti* (eternal satisfaction). And he kept this longing ever clean, ever ablaze, ever fiery; he never allowed it to die down or become dull or become mediocre. It was kept to a high intensity of heat through his fervour through his zeal, through his enthusiasm, through his keen longing and eagerness.

It was this that was the key to the Self-realisation, sainthood and sagehood of beloved and worshipful Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji. This is the factor that causes a latent force, a spiritual force and power, to make itself actively manifest, to be dynamically expressed in our life as a transforming power, an uplifting force. If it is kept us to the very last, it takes us to the supreme state of blessedness and crowns our life with the glory of God-realisation.

And Guru Maharaj was that awakening and sparking factor who ignited within you the dormant and latent spiritual tendencies through his wisdom teachings. It is when you opened a book of his and your eyes alighted upon some page. That is what caused the miracle. That became the tuning point. Immediately the latent and dormant spiritual *samskaras* and *vasanas* sprang forth into dynamism. For innumerable souls all over the world in this twentieth century, the wisdom teachings of Gurudev have acted as a sparking factor, as that sudden, awakening touch, transforming force. Thousands and thousands of lives all over the world have been transformed by his power of grace, by the power of his wisdom teachings.

But then, sparks are to be fanned. Flames are to be fed with fuel. If the fuel that is there is burned up, then the fire dies out and it becomes ash. It has to be stoked; it has to be fed with fresh fuel, and it is an ongoing, continuous process. It is not as though if you put some burning material into the fireplace that it will go on burning forever. No, it does not happen that way. It is not so.

This being Gurudev's *sannyasa* day, let us consider what *sannyasa* is, what constitutes *sannyasa*. Guru Maharaj was very specific about it. He said that merely shaving the head and putting on coloured cloth does not make you a *sannyasin*. A change of location does not make you a *sannyasin*. Coming away into seclusion or sitting on a mountain top or inside a cave in the forest does not constitute *sannyasa*, if together with this outer giving-up or renunciation, you have not simultaneously also kept up a process of a constant and a continuous

inner giving up, an inner renunciation of the false ideas that “I am this body, I am a human individual, I am a physical being, I am a psychological being, I am mind, I am emotion, I am sentiment, I am thought, I am desire, I am memory, I am longing, I am imagination.”

All these ideas constitute ignorance. All these falsehood should be renounced. They should be rejected. Truth has to be affirmed again and again and yet again. The essence of renunciation, therefore, is renunciation of this identification with the human, individual personality and all that it constitutes, its entire make-up, right from the physical up to the subtle—memory and imagination, projecting into the future and identifying with the past.

Gurudev was very specific. To lead the spiritual life it is not necessary to withdraw into the forest, hide oneself in a cave or go to a mountain top. What is needed is the renunciation of false ideas, of identification with the false human personality. It requires renunciation of ego, *abhimana*, *ahamkara*, renunciation of desire, renunciation of attachment, renunciation of *mamata* and *asakti* (mine-ness and attachment).

Again and again, in all the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavad Gita wisdom teachings, *nirmama*, *nirmoha* and *anasakti* (absence of mine-ness, absence of attachment and dispassion) have been stressed. Thus true renunciation, true *sannyasa*, constitutes giving up this false idea: “I am a human individual. I am a physical being, I am a mental being, I am an emotional, sentimental being, I am an intellectual being. I am a being separate from God, apart from all others.” All that is ignorance. That is bondage. That is *samsara*. That is *maya*. That is *prapancha*. That is individuality. Renunciation of this is real *sannyasa*.

Renunciation of the ego that comes out of this ignorance, this identification—that is *sannyasa*. Renunciation of selfishness that springs out of the ego—that is *sannyasa*. Renunciation of attachment that springs out of another aspect of ego, I-ness and mine-ness—that is *sannyasa*. Renunciation of desires, the innumerable desires—their number is legion—that follow in the train of ego identification, attachment and selfishness—that is real *tyaga*, that is real *sannyasa*.

Once desire is given up, one no longer has any *sankalpa*, no other *spruha* (desire) other than devotion to the lotus Feet of the Supreme, devotion to attain *aparoksha'nubhuti* (direct, actual experience). “I am a mere instrument; whatever is being done, Thou it is that doest all.” This idea becomes firmly implanted in the consciousness, and then only *sankalpa* is no longer there. That is the state of *sannyasa*. That is the state of real renunciation.

God bless you to ponder these truths that have been shared with you this morning by the prompting of Guru Maharaj. May the grace of the Almighty make

you a true *sadhaka*, a real devotee of the Lord, a real renunciate and a real walker upon the path of spirituality and spiritual life! God bless you all!

See God In All

Radiant Atman! As we approach the great day of Guru Purnima, I offer loving adorations to that One without a second, about whom the great ones, your ancestors, from ancient times right down to the present have proclaimed: "We have seen that Being, beholding whom the mortal becomes immortal. To know Him is the one way of becoming liberated; there is no other way!" Worshipful homage unto that Indweller who is seated within the hearts of each one of you, to whom your bodies are moving temples! May you ever be in the awareness that God is within and without, and, therefore, may all your dealings be worthy of the God who pervades you and surrounds you. May they be worthy of the Divinity that is immanent in all of creation.

All life is sacred. Therefore, deal reverentially with all beings. All beings are repositories of the Divine, because He is the Presence within. Recognise this Presence. Conduct yourself in a lofty and sublime manner. Be kind to all. Be respectful and just to all. Honour the sanctity, purity and holiness of each and every living being. Be pure in thought, word and deed. Harbour good thoughts, noble, sublime thoughts, goodwill and good wishes towards all your fellow beings. Be polite and courteous in your day-to-day dealing with others. Do not bear ill-will towards anyone. Do not bear a grudge towards anyone. Do not taunt anyone. Do not backbite or carry tales. All these go against the basic concept that God dwells in all people.

All people are deserving of our reverence, respect and goodwill. Honour the individuality of others. Not without reason that Lord Krishna washed the feet of the guests who came to attend the *rajasuya yajna* of Yudhishtira. Not without reason did Lakshmana never lift up his face and look at Mother Sita. Not without reason did Sri Ramakrishna go and sweep the hut of a harijan. The living presence of God in all beings should be the basis of our attitude and behaviour towards others; our approach to the world.

In one little verse, Sant Tulasidas has given the whole of what I have been saying: "*Siyaramamaya sab jag jani karaun pranam jori juga pani*—I bow with my folded hands, knowing that this whole world is pervaded by my *ishta devata*, Sita and Ramachandra." And, Arjuna experienced this when the glorious vision of the Cosmic Form was bestowed upon him in the eleventh chapter of the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*. Beholding the Cosmic Form, Arjuna could do nothing but go on bowing, bowing, bowing, filled with awe and reverence. He did not know where to bow; everywhere he looked, he saw only God. So he bowed in all the ten directions. He said: "I bow to Thee in the front, in the back, to the right, to the left, above, below, on all sides. I bow to Thee everywhere—*sarvatah pani padam* (with hands and feet everywhere.)"

This should be the basis of the vision, it should be the approach, the attitude, the behaviour of the true, sincere, spiritual seeker and aspirant who really wants to attain the cosmic vision in and through one's life, who does not set the vision aside only for the period of his special study and meditation and reflecting "Oh yes. God is everywhere."

A great realised saint of Andhra Pradesh wrote a book called *Vyavahara Vedantin*. He says that Vedanta is not meant for your study place or your meditation room; it is meant for the field of your daily activity. This should be the vision. This should be the truth upon which you base your life. This should be your inner feeling, attitude. For the sake of the sentiments of others, you may keep it within yourself; you may not demonstrate it, or it may also become an ego-trip. It is not necessary that others know, but all throughout your waking state, in the midst of *vyavahara*, this awareness should be there: "I am in God, God is within me; God is within all. I am dealing with God; the whole thing is heightened by this Presence." This *bhava advaita* should always be there. This is our great *adesa*: *bhavadvaitam sada kuryat* (One should always have the attitude of unity).

This, therefore, is the great central truth our Upanishads have given us—*sarvam khalvidam brahma* (All this is Brahman). It should never be lost sight of. It should always shine in our hearts as a great light—this truth, this fact, this central mystical fact of God's presence now, here. More and more, the world is becoming aware of this great fact, only they are not able to put it into practice—"I am in the Light. The Light is within me. I am the Light." *Yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pasyati*. (He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me...), is a sure way of never being separated from the awareness of God, of always being in God. He has revealed it to us by this wonderful verse.

So this, therefore, should be the basis of all *vyavahara* as we approach Guru Purnima. I pay loving adorations to Gurudev, who more than anyone brought home this truth to us: "Within is Ram. Without is Ram. In front is Ram. Above is Ram. Below is Ram. Behind is Ram. To the right is Ram. To the left is Ram. Everywhere is Ram." Gurudev brought home the supreme *advaitic* experience into the common language of everyone so that all people could understand.

See God in every face, and then do your service as the worship offered to the God who is within all beings. This is not merely the basis of *karma yoga*. This is the declaration of the Upanishads, of the loftiest Vedanta: *isavasyamidam sarvam yatkimcha jagatyam jagat* (All this whatsoever in this universe that moves or moves not is indwelt by the Lord). How can you ever be away from Him? Wherever you go He is there—*taddure tadvantike* (It, the Atman, is distant and It is near). Everywhere He is here!

May God and Guru shower grace and blessings upon you and make you realise this truth and live in the awareness of this truth each and every day of your life. This is my humble supplication at the Feet of God and Guru.

No matter whether you may forget it a hundred times, a thousand times, make up your mind to never lose sight of this inner awareness, this practice of the presence of the universal awareness. Make it one of the important *abhyasas* (practices) in daily life. Hold on to it. One day you will succeed; it will become *sahaja* (natural) for you. Until that, never leave it. God bless you!

What Gurudev Is For Us

Adorable Presence Divine, worshipful homage unto Thee! We who are inseparable parts of Thy eternal, infinite existence, one with You in essential nature, have forgotten our eternal relationship with Thee Who art our *adi*, *madhya* and *anta* (beginning, middle and end), Who art our all in all. Through this forgetfulness we have alienated ourselves from Thee and thus find ourselves to be in a state deprived of the bliss, peace and light that is our birthright, that is what we are. We have deprived ourselves of this Self-experience, and we are living a spurious, false, counterfeit experience filled with love and hate, laughing and weeping, anxiety and tension, fear and bondage, fighting and quarrelling, self-centredness, selfishness, anger and jealousy. It is a *kritrimavastha*, a *vishamavastha*—an unnatural state, an abnormal state. It is not *sahaja* (natural) to us, but *kritrima* (unnatural).

At this moment, in the calm hours of this silent morning, in the spiritual presence of our beloved and worshipful Holy Master Guru Bhagavan Swami Sivanandaji, we offer adorations and homage to Your Feet. From the bottom of our hearts, human hearts, we pray that this separation, this alienation, this wandering away from Thee, may end. May this forgetfulness, this slumber of non-awareness of our own *svarupa*, our eternal relationship with You, which is the root cause of all pain, suffering, sorrow, misery, delusion and infatuation, come to an end by Thy grace.

May we be restored to our eternal, inner, divine oneness with Thee Who art the only reality in the midst of countless billions of half-realities and appearances. Then alone will sorrow give place to joy, restlessness and agitation give place to peace, delusion give place to knowledge and wisdom, and an insufficient, partial, existence give place to *puṇattva* that is Brahmanhood.

In this morning hour we pray: “*asato ma satgamaya, tamaso ma jyotirgamaya, mrityorma amritamgamaya*.” Put an end to this separation for Thou hast clearly stated: “*tam vidyad-duhkha-samyoga-viyogam yoga-samjnitam*—It is the cessation of union with pain that is Yoga.” With Yoga, all pain ceases, all suffering ceases, all *tapatraya* ceases. No longer is there weeping and wailing; there is bliss, there is joy. Grant us the gift of that Yoga.

That is the call in the immortal wisdom teachings of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, where among many messages, many teachings, many commandments, Thou Who art Narayana hast also uttered the call to Nara, to Arjuna, the representative man: “*tasmat yogi bhava’rjuna.*” And as Swami Sivananda Thou hast repeated this call again: “Come, come, become a Yogi. Why do you weep and wail? Why do you unnecessarily prolong this bondage? Come, come, become a Yogi.” Thus in his call to modern mankind of this twentieth century, Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji has resounded that ancient call.

Worshipful spiritual presence, Gurudev, thou who art our light and guide in life, keep sounding that call again and again in our hearts. This is the supplication at thy feet of all the seeking souls who are gathered in your presence, drawn by your *guru kripa*, grace, morning after morning to this sacred Samadhi Hall of your Ashram.

Radiant Immortal Atman! As we approach the sacred *punyatithi aradhana* anniversary, we have been considering the heritage that Gurudev has left behind for us. We have mentioned this unique, most precious, invaluable facility of an Ashram on the banks of the Ganga. It is a fact, a felt, solid, tangible, material fact. No one can deny it. It is a facility of *bhakti, jnana, dhyana, karma yoga* and *paropakara seva*. Then there is *jnana ganga*, a vast body of inspiring, soul-arousing, illuminating, instructing spiritual literature. And he also gave us a certain pattern of life, an ideal, which he called divine life, not merely the gross physical life or subtle psychological life, but the divine life, a life qualified by our *svarupa*, qualified by our innermost essential nature, a life that is not merely an expression or of the nature of our non-essential *upadhis*, but a life that is the expression of the divinity which is the innermost reality of each and every one of us. He gave us the *adesa* and *sandesa*: “Live your life divinely, for that is what you are. If you manifest your *upadhis*, you are not manifesting yourself.”

Also, the quintessence of all the scriptures, the direction towards Divinity, was given a systematic shape. Gurudev said: “Its foundation is truth, purity and compassion, universal love. And the structure is ceaseless selfless service, devotional worship, discipline, concentration and meditation, ceaseless enquiry, aspiration, *jijnasa, mumukshutva, vichara, viveka*, investigation into the nature of the Reality behind and beyond appearances, sublating the *nama* and *rupa* which are ever-changing, never real, only appearance, and going beyond them to the *asti-bhati-priya*, into the *satchidananda tattva*, that which exists eternally, that which shines with luminous Self-consciousness, knowledge, light, and that which is very dear indeed for it is full of bliss.”

So the superstructure he has given us is *seva, bhakti, dhyana* and *atma-jnana*, upon the foundation of *ahimsa, satyam* and *brahmacharya*. But his unique bestowal to us is that he has given us a new identity. He said: “You are not here merely to wander about like a wayfarer, to get ditched somewhere, waylaid and

stripped of everything by the dacoits of the five senses. Rather, you are here to attain union with the Supreme Being. You are engaged in that. This is the innermost meaning of life. It is a journey to put an end to the separation and once again attain union with the Divine. Then alone sorrow gives place to joy, putting an end to *samyoga* (contact) with *duhkha* (pain). Therefore become a Yogi.”

Thus, he gave us an identity: “You are all Yogis; you must live as Yogis. Life is Yoga. Life is a process of regaining that oneness, that connection, that inner relationship, that lost link with the divine source of your being. Therefore live as Yogis. Be aware of yourselves as Yogis.”

And this new identity was to be based upon a matter-of-fact pragmatic life. Merely imagining ourselves to be Yogis is not enough. Be practical Yogis. Practise Yoga *sadhana*. Be a *sadhaka*. More than anything else, be a *sadhaka*. Whether you are a lawyer, engineer, doctor, professor, teacher, taxi-driver, businessman or a shopkeeper, no matter what you are, be a *sadhaka*. “Do real *sadhana* my dear children. Do real *sadhana*.” Do *sadhana*. Be a real *sadhaka*. Engage yourself in spiritual *sadhana*. Let it become an inseparable part of your day-to-day life. Let the day start with *sadhana*. Let the day end with *sadhana*. Let the day and all its activities be infilled with the spirit of *sadhana*—*yat yat karma karomi tat tadakhilam sambho tavaradhanam* (Whatsoever work I do, O Lord, I offer unto Thee as worship).

This is the unique bestowal of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji to the fortunate global humanity of the twentieth century. And, most fortunate of all are each of you who have come into direct contact with this bestowal, and who have decided to adopt that type of life, as a *sadhaka*. You are a *sadhaka* and you are a Yogi. That is a new birth he gave to you. That is a new identity he imparted to you, taking away the wrong identity: “I am so and so, I am such and such; I am a male, I am a female; I am a *brahmin*, *sudra*, *kshatriya*, *vaisya*; I am a *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *sannyasin*, *vanaprastha*.” Above all of these, he gave the identity: “I am a Yogi wanting to attain union with the Divine. I am a *sadhaka*; my life means for me *sadhana*. My life should be infilled with *sadhana*. If *sadhana* is taken away, I am a cipher; my life has ceased to be. There is no more life in me; I am a dead being, *sava*.” Like that he gave us this new identity of a *sadhaka* and of a Yogi, of a *bhakta* and *paropakari*, of a *dhyani* and a Vedantin. “Be a Vedantin! Roar Om, Om, Om! Come out this cage of flesh and bones!” That is what he wanted.

So, he gave us a new consciousness, a new awareness of ourselves, a new identity purely in relation to God, connected with God directly, connected with Brahman directly. But above all he gave us the identity: “Live as a Yogi. Live as a *sadhaka*.” This is what you have inherited. This is what he left behind, a priceless treasure, a priceless heritage, which cannot be evaluated or estimated in terms of gold and silver and precious gems, which is *atulya* (incomparable), *amulya* (invaluable).

With this sharing, let us offer our worshipful adorations at the feet of Guru Bhagavan and offer our loving homage to that Being Whom he represented, Whose ancient call, which was sounded in the Gita *jnana upadesa*, he once again revived and gave voice to in this twentieth century: “Come, come, become a Yogi, attain Self-realisation, God-realisation, in this very life.”

That is Gurudev for us. That is what he shall ever be for those who have sincerely tried to ponder and tried to find out what we are to him, in what way we are related to him and what he has been to us—his life, his teachings. It is the *maha samadhi* anniversary of such a being that we are preparing to observe upon the twenty-fourth of this month. Let us fully appreciate who that being is whose *maha samadhi* we observe the *navami* (ninth day) after Guru Purnima. God bless you all!

Understanding Your Life

Blessed Atman! May God give you the gift of understanding your life and thus living it with understanding!

We never stop to ponder life. We never pause in our ceaseless outward-oriented activities which we think is life. We do not pause for awhile to take time to step out of life’s stream, to stand on the banks and observe life from that point.

The banks do not move; the banks do not change. Constantly the river moves; constantly the waters change. Even for a single second, you are not standing before the same river. The river that was before you one second ago is not there now. What is before you is some other river; the other river has gone.

Even so with life. You are also ever-changing. If you step out, stand on the bank and observe life, you may get a better understanding about it and its flow. You must stop for awhile and ponder life. You must pause a little from ceaselessly being rushed. It takes time.

On the last day of July 1963, we offered a grand worship to Gurudev upon his *shodasi* (16th day), *punyatithi*, as an *aradhana* offered. From the 1st of August 1963 our life was different than it was before the 14th of July, 1963. How did we face that new life? What was our state of mind at that time? What thoughts, what ideas filled our minds? How did we view the future?

Year after year we re-enact that same drama by offering a grand worship in the Samadhi. We recreate that same day. We also relive that experience and move towards the future in a changed way, just as we did in the 1st of August, 1963. For there was a great difference. We realised that we would have to stand on our own legs. We realised that we had to be self-reliant, that we were the architects of our own fate; we were the moulders of our own future. We had to

get busy doing that work and carving out a glorious future in the light of Gurudev's teachings and example to us—building our future in a spiritual way because it was not a future in time, it was a future in terms of our spiritual evolution.

Every year that day is observed, that drama is re-enacted. We try to relive that momentous moment. But then, after the event passes, does it leave us cold, as we were before, or does it leave us with something else within us? That is the thing to be considered. If, upon considering it, we find that there is no fresh awakening, that no new aspiration comes into us, then it has become only a mechanical routine which we observe year after year—having all the outer frills but empty of content inside. It has just become automatic, repetitive; it takes us no further, no higher. The very purpose of the day has been lost. The very intention with which our ancients conceived of such recurring annual traditions would not be fulfilled; it would be lost.

Yesterday was such a day. May you understand it. May you understand the intention behind such a tradition. May you understand the purpose of such an annual observance. May you understand the significance to you and your life. May you understand life. That is the one thing needful to live effectively, to live life fruitfully—the understanding of it and the living of it with the understanding way. May Sat Guru Bhagavan bless you with such a deep understanding of your life and yourself in it. God bless you!

Claim Your Birthright

Homage unto Thee, Thou Infinite One, who has manifested Thyself into the countless names and forms that constitute Your temporary outer appearance! Thou art also the hidden, inner divine essence of all things; the world is pervaded by Thy divinity. Within these innumerable names and forms that Thou hast manifested as Thy outer *darsan*, Thou abidest as the hidden, inner reality, the one common consciousness uniting all existence into a homogeneous, inner spiritual unity.

The innumerable and diverse forms in which Thou hast manifested Thyself constitute Thy grandeur, Thy beauty, Thy endlessness. We pay homage, we offer worshipful adorations both to Thy manifestation as well as to Thy inner reality, the hidden one universal inner essence. We worship Thee as *sahasra-murtaye sahasra-padakshi sirorubahave* (innumerable forms, innumerable feet, eyes, heads and hands). We worship Thee also as *eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah* (God, who is one only, hidden in all beings).

Grant us the supreme privilege and blessedness of recognising Thee in both Thy manifestation as well as the unmanifest essential presence within, and in and through, all Thy diverse and multifarious manifestations. Thus granting us this boon and blessing us, enable us to abide in Thee at all times, either when we

contemplate Thee with closed eyes, inturned gaze and inward spiritual vision seeing Thy inner oneness, or when we open our eyes and gaze at Thee in Thy multifarious manifestation.

Either way, help and enable us to ever abide in the consciousness and awareness of Thy being and in the awareness of You being our all-in-all, in whom we live, move and have our being. There is no greater blessedness, for with this recognition, this vision, this awareness, this approach, this view of life, we shall ever abide in Thee. We shall never be away from Thee at any time, at any moment.

This we ask of Thee at this moment: the living of Thy truth that Thou art the one as well as the many, that Thou art the all-pervading, indwelling hidden reality as well as the multifarious, infinite appearance. May we be found worthy of receiving from Thee the gift of this awareness of Thy non-dual absolute form as well as Thy cosmic manifest form. Help us to be worthy of this vision, even as Thou didst help Arjuna to be worthy of Thy vision of the cosmic form by granting him the boon of a divine sight.

Radiant Atman! Prompted by the indwelling Being and induced by Gurudev, we had occasion to mention Gurudev's oft-repeated concept: "Supreme blessedness is your birthright; divine perfection is your birthright; peace profound, eternal bliss is your birthright; fearlessness and freedom—*moksha*—is your birthright. Why unnecessarily prolong your bondage? Come, come, be a Yogi! Strive upon the path of spiritual perfection. Claim your birthright, not in the distant future but today, right now, at this moment!"

It is in this context that we are led to dwell further upon this assertion of Gurudev that Divinity, freedom, liberation and fearlessness, peace and joy are your birthright, not bondage and sorrow, nor restlessness and weeping and wailing. They are superficial, avoidable and unnecessary. It is not what you are meant for; this is not why you have come here.

But then, even though he declared this supreme blessedness to be your birthright, he also asked you to claim it. Even as the divine Master Jesus gave the admonition: "Ask and it shall be given. Seek and thou shalt find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you," so Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji said: "Claim your birthright." We have to claim.

All that is necessary to have this supreme blessedness is already within you. We have to invoke it from within; we have to invoke it, activate it and apply it. Then that which is our birthright will be obtained by us. We shall find it. We shall be given it. And the portals to that blessed state will be thrown wide open to us.

But we should claim. This constitutes spiritual life. This asking, this seeking, this knocking, this claiming, this striving and deserving it, constitutes *sadhana*, constitutes *yoga abhyasa*, constitutes practical spiritual life. This constitutes the quintessence of what you are as seekers and *sadhakas*.

Lord Rama was Divinity incarnate. The Divine, as all scriptures declare and as all saints reaffirm, is omnipotent, capable of doing anything and everything. Not merely doing, He is also capable of knowing what to do because He is omniscient. And whatever He wants to do anywhere, He can do it because He is everywhere present, omnipresent. As Divinity incarnate, Lord Rama was present in Lanka by the side of Sita. He knew exactly what to do if He wanted to bring Her back. He also had the power of transporting Her back in the twinkling of an eye to where He wanted Her. Yet, having come into manifestation, He voluntarily observed the laws of this manifest plane of human existence and strove.

He did *sadhana*. He searched for Divine Mother Sita and kept asking: "Did you see Her? Did She come this way? Will you tell me where I can find Her, where She is?" With the help of his brother, He searched throughout the jungle regions where He was then living. Then He actively sought the help of the jungle dwellers. He was humble enough to seek their help and then, with great labour he built a bridge, enlisting the help of monkeys, bears and other types of forest dwelling beings. They all exerted together as one, intent upon this one attainment: "We must find Sita. We must help Rama to regain Her." There was a concentrated focusing of all energy towards the one objective and fulfilment of finding Sita and bringing Her back.

This whole process has to be recreated within the personality and the life of the *sadhaka* and the seeker. All of our forces—physical, biological, vital, mental, intellectual, moral—should be geared up and brought together and focused upon this one attainment. Our entire, total personality should become completely focused upon this supreme attainment. We should not disdain anything. All our powers, our will, our soul, our heart, our entire spiritual being must be geared to the great quest and attainment. Harness and bring to bear your total personality potential in this supreme endeavour of *sadhana*, Yoga, spiritual life, *abhyasa*. Then you will be able once again to be enthroned in the palace in Ayodhya. Your quest will be crowned with total success because you brought into active use all the forces at your disposal.

Our individual consciousness has been totally dominated by the five *karma indriyas* and the five *jnana indriyas* represented by the ten heads of Ravana, who has forcibly abducted and taken possession of the individual personality consciousness. You are under the domination of this complex constituted by the ten organs—the senses of action and the senses of perception of knowledge. That is the Ravana, and it has to be overcome. We have to

harness the energies of our total personality in this overcoming, in this confrontation, in this victory. Contemplate this!

And the harnessing of the total personality is the essence of divine life, for it is an integrated approach of orienting all our physical activities, our mental faculties, our emotional potential and our intellect towards this divine goal, towards Vedantic-realisation, *atma-jnana*, *brahma-sakshatkara*.

And by happy coincidence, the imminent visit of the President of India to this Ashram has brought into focus this nature of your life here. For each of you has been given a badge to wear which has at its centre OM, the supreme Goal. The whole of the Mandukya Upanishad is centred upon the exposition of the supreme, central Reality as symbolised and indicated by OM. And this central, supreme goal and objective, which is your birthright, which you are in your essential nature, and whose divine perfection and wholeness is already within you, inherent in you, has to be attained.

This badge also makes you aware of the manner in which you should utilise your life and everything that constitutes life, in order to attain this goal. For the badge also has on it Gurudev's admonitions SERVE, LOVE, MEDITATE, REALISE. Give up selfishness and focus all the body's activities in *nishkama-karma-yoga*, selfless service of the *virat*, God in manifestation. Bring to bear all the power, all the potential of your feelings, emotions, sentiments in devotion directed towards the Supreme Reality as *sakara saguna brahman*, God who is your father, mother, friend, relative, your wealth and wisdom, your all-in-all, who is your very own. *Tvam eva sarvam mama deva deva*—O my Lord of lords, God of gods, Thou art everything to me. And daily focus your thoughts, your entire vision, your awareness, upon that great Reality through concentration and meditation. Thus harnessing all your powers—physical, emotional, mental and intellectual—seek to realise. This integrated approach is Gurudev's gift to you—divine life.

Live the divine life. This is what you are expected to do. Let it be etched in your heart. What am I? I am a centre of selflessness and service, of devotion and worship, of concentration and meditation, of aspiration and realisation. This is what my life should be. This is what I constitute. I should apply all the energies of my entire human potential, my human personality complex, in that great direction, to realise and be free.

So, your new badges remind you of your birthright. They draw your mind towards this great truth. God-realisation and divine perfection are your birthright. Fearlessness and freedom are your birthright. Supreme, profound, eternal peace and infinite joy are your birthright. Thus, by diverse ways, the Supreme Being seeks to forcibly attract your attention towards the central purpose of your life, the supreme, spiritual, divine goal of your life. How kind, how gracious, how compassionate, how full of infinite love is the Lord, that *yena kena prakarena* (by

diverse means) He seeks to bring us back into Self-awareness, to wake us up from forgetfulness, to focus our attention upon the purpose of our human existence, to urge us to lead the divine life and attain liberation in this very body, here and now. How compassionate!

How can we say that God has forgotten us, or He has not done His duty towards us? More than duty he has done. He has filled our lives to fullness and overflowing. Our vessel is overflowing with so much grace, compassionate love, and supreme, divine mercy. He has blessed us. He thus forcibly reminds us: that we are all manifestations; to lead the divine life; to serve, love, meditate and realise; to awake, arise and attain the goal—to become illumined.

So, even if we forget God, God does not forget us. Even if we turn in another direction and pursue lesser goals, He will not allow us. He forcibly draws our attention towards our supreme goal, our own greatest blessedness. That is God for you. May we recognise His grace and clearly see His love. May we clearly understand how much He is calling: Come, come, *uttishthata, jagrata, srinvantu vishve amritasya putrah*—O ye children of Immortality, listen, listen, hear, hearken to My call. Arise and come unto Me. Attain the goal and become blessed.

God calls us today as always. If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, we can see that God is calling us every day to the attainment of our highest goal, which is our birthright. Claiming it is the life spiritual. We should apply our time, energy and life towards this great attainment. Then we are wise. Then no one can prevent us from attainment supreme blessedness. For we have lived wisely, acted wisely. We have claimed.

Booklet Seven

"We have not been sent here to go around in circles. We have not been sent here to grope in darkness. We have not been sent here to wander, stumble and fall, to weep and wail. We have been sent here for overcoming and accomplishment. And until we attain that, we should not rest upon our oars."

-Sri Swami Chidananda



A Special Twenty Day Sadhana

Blessed Atman! Radiant souls eagerly yearning and longing for liberation from all limitations, all imperfections and all vexing bonds that hold us down to a gross earth consciousness, which is unnatural to us, which is not our true state, which is not our real condition. You are all mumukshus longing for liberation, aspiring for liberating wisdom, engaged in Yoga practice and spiritual living, who are lovers of God and righteousness, devotees of the divine life and followers of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Today is Thursday, the day of the Guru, and as a worthwhile exercise and expression of our earnestness to grow in devotion to the Guru, to show how really and truly sincere, earnest and serious we are about our devotion to the Guru, it would be worthwhile to see if we can adopt for our practice over the next twenty days one item per day of Gurudev's Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions. For, we cannot afford to print these Instructions in thousands upon thousands, in innumerable languages, giving them to the whole world, and then have the queer notion that we are exceptions to them, we need not read them, become acquainted with them in depth, nor necessarily practise them and apply them to our own life. Why should such a thought arise? Because we are close to Gurudev, we are doing his service, seva. Therefore, his rules do not apply to us so very seriously. He will not bother whether we are following his Twenty Instructions or not. We are doing his seva!

This is called maya. It is a practical laboratory demonstration of maya. This is what maya is: to bypass the guru's instructions with the smug assurance that our seva makes us special VIPs, privileged with exemption from his instructions.

Well, if this type of notion takes root in your heart, it is only a disaster to you. It does not affect Gurudev. He does not lose, because he has nothing to lose. Long ago he gave up everything and got everything. And that which he has got is something which cannot be lost. Even otherwise, he has nothing to lose, because he voluntarily gave up everything friends, relatives, home, property, money, fame, comfort, security, praise, renown, flattery. He gave up everything and became possessionless and desireless. He had only one desire when he came here over seventy years ago to sit under a tree, get absorbed in God's Name and become absorbed in God.

So, if we are wise enough to follow his golden teachings, his divine admonitions, his loving spiritual instructions given with a great goodwill and a desire that we should all rise to great heights of spiritual experience and blessedness then they will clear up all obstacles between us and God, between us and Guru's grace. We will open a wide channel through which grace rushes towards us, inundates us, fills us, and lifts us up to sublime heights.

If we do not follow his teachings we invite disaster, not for Swami Sivanandaji, not for the Divine Life Society, but first for ourselves, and then for Sivananda Ashram, which becomes a less effective centre of inspiration and spiritual help to sincere seeking souls. So there might be some minus effect to Sivananda Ashram, and a total disaster for you, but Swami Sivanandaji will not in any way be affected. For he is now in a state beyond being affected. He is established in a changeless state of total perfection, supreme blessedness, immeasurable peace and indescribable bliss. He is not in that state, but he is that state.

Swami Sivananda is pure satchidananda. Swami Sivananda is total bliss. This is not Chidananda saying, this is scripture saying, sruti vakya. Veda Bhagavan says: brahmavit brahmaiva bhavati. The knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman Itself. Anandam brahmeti vyajanat. That Brahman is verily bliss, the experience is Bliss. It is in that Brahmic state that he whom the world knew as Sivananda abides eternally, and, therefore, what we do with our lives is going to affect us, but it is not going to affect Swami Sivananda in his Brahmic state.

Therefore, it is wise that we make use of this life for our highest welfare. Or, if not for our highest welfare, we should at least work for our welfare for the simple reason that no one else can work for our welfare. They can assist us in working for our welfare, but there is a saying which is based upon experience and expresses universal human wisdom: God helps those who help themselves.

The great scripture called Yoga Vasishtha which ran into thousands of pages to explain to us that his world is a mere appearance, a figment of imagination, a creation of the mind, there is no abiding truth in it, it is less real than dream that scripture ends by saying exert, you must exert to attain that

experience. Otherwise that experience will be far, far way, and you will be weeping and wailing, beating your breast, and knowing your head against the wall in frustration and desperation. If you take world to be a solid reality but want to rise to that higher experience exert. No gains without pains. Be up and doing. Exert, exert, purushartha. Purusharta is the ultimate message, the ultimate thesis of the Yoga Vasishtha. Purusharta was the ultimate declaration, admonition and directive so far as you yourself are concerned.

So, Yoga Vasishtha may say that everything is a myth, everything is less real than a dream; it can say it because the one who said it knew it. But Yoga Vasishtha tells you: exert. No gains without pains. Have sadvichara, satsanga. Do sadhana!

Therefore, this morning's sharing is for a little purushartha on your part. Be wise: know the difference between your own present state and experience absolute an experience absolute from which height you can give yoga Vasishtha to everyone. In that experience there is no hunger, there is no thirst, there is no fatigue, there is no pain, there is no elation or depression, there is no disease, there is no old age, there is no sorrow, there is no limitation. If you are in that state you are competent to teach, to declare, to presume Yoga Vasishtha not otherwise.

I am not teaching Yoga Vasishtha, but I am declaring to you the first directive of Yoga Vasishtha: Do sadhana, exert, engage in right action. You will not lose. Exert purushartha!

Therefore, from today onwards, for the next twenty days, I earnestly entreat that you exert in one specific way, namely, Gurudev's twenty Important Spiritual Instructions. Study them, ponder them, go over them from all sides. Take a good look at them, and try to find out how you are related to them, to what extent they are part of you. Because that will decide to what percent you are his follower. You may be a disciple, but you may not be his follower. You are not following him. So that means that your discipleship still leaves much to be desired. Because if we are disciples and devotees but do not follow him, then our discipleship leaves much to be desired and our devotion leaves much to be desired. They should be wholehearted and whole total.

So let us prepare for a very special sadhana this next twenty days and carefully study and put into practice Gurudev's Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions. Then you are on your way to becoming a full, genuine, authentic, real and actual disciple, devotee and follower of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji, who loved all spiritual aspirants and who loves you too because you are in the spiritual life. He loves you very much indeed all the more because you are not only a spiritual aspirant, but you are a spiritual aspirant living in his holy Ashram in this divine part of holy India. He has got great love for you in a very, very special way.

As Lord Krishna said in the latter part of the twelfth chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita: All are dear to Me, but, My devotee, are very dear to Me, O Arjuna. And He did not have to demonstrate that Arjuna was very dear to Him, because He had already amply proved that His love for Arjuna was very special, very out of the ordinary, exceptionally great, by having given Arjuna the eleventh chapter Yoga experience.

Even so, Swami Sivanandaji does not gave to prove his love to anyone, because he has amply proved it to the hilt by drawing you here from your own life, keeping you in his Ashram, surrounding you with this wonderful spiritual atmosphere and providing you with all the facilities for karma yoga, bhakti yoga, dhyana yoga, japa yoga, jnana yoga, sankirtan yoga and seva yoga. Everything, everything, everything! Rarely can you find a more fertile and richer field for spiritual evolution, unfoldment and attainment than Swami Sivanandaji's Sivananda Ashram on the right bank of the Divine Mother Ganga in sacred Uttarakhand in holy India.

If you have eyes to see, you will see it. If you have ears to hear, you will hear and understand what is being said. And if you are a real spiritual aspirant, you will be experiencing the truth of what has been said every moment. That there may be distractions, little imperfections and difficulties is only something plus. They are additional factors, irritants, thorns on the rose-bush. They may be. Even the richest cloth sometimes soiled. You may have to have it washed or dry-cleaned. That is inevitable. But the precious nature of that which is precious never varies. Even a diamond may need a little scrubbing and cleaning if it becomes overlaid with dirt and grime. But a diamond is always a diamond.

So, that this is an Ashram offering multi-facilities for a total all round spiritual unfoldment and evolution is one hundred per cent true. Absolutely, without any argument, it is true. Without any doubt it is true, if we relate ourselves as sadhakas and true seekers.

Therefore, it is in your hands to make this period into a glorious, grand period of your life, something that is great. It is in your hands. Do it to the best of your ability. This is all God expects of each one of us. He does not expect us to surpass ourselves or do the impossible. But He does expect, and Gurudev does expect, that each one of us try our level best to do the best we can, to do whatever is possible for us.

So, a lot has been shared. How much has been received, the Indweller knows. I cannot really help it, because it is not in my hands. It is in your hands. It is your end of the rope. Anyway, this has been shared. It has been shared in all seriousness, in all sincerity and with all humility. So, leave no stone unturned. Commence the study and practice of the most basic and important set of spiritual

instructions that Swami Sivanandaji has ever given, and which he has left forever for all mankind as his legacy.

Keep Open The Doors Of Your Heart

Salutations and prostrations to all the brahmavidya gurus from the earliest times even beyond creation. Adi Narayana, Sadasiva to the tattva vetta brahma jnanis, siddha mahapurushas, of the Vedic era, the Upanishadic times, to the medieval acharyas: Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbarka, Gauranga Mahaprabhu, to all the great, modern illumined souls, seers and sages: Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadev, Vivekananda, Rama Tirtha, Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Swami Ramdas, Gurudev Swami Sivananda, Anandamayi Ma and to all the Great ones who have ever blessed this holy land, punya bhumi, matri bhumi, India, with their divine presence, sanctifying their times, sanctifying the very ground on which they trod!

They are all bridges to liberation, immortality. They are all portals to supreme blessedness. They are all gateways to the highest kaivalya samrajya moksha (the kingdom of final liberation). Mahajana yena gatah sa panthah that is the way, the way trodden by the great ones. And preceding us they have left their footprints upon the sands of time. May you also go that way and attain the same state of supreme blessedness that they attained!

They are pioneers upon this great path that leads to liberation, illumination, supreme blessedness, attaining which there is no returning into this world of pain and death. They are trailblazers. Therefore, to keep them in the heart, to keep their ideal lives before us as radiant examples to emulate and live up to, is the surest way of attaining that very state of blessedness.

Contemplate, therefore, the saints, the sages, the seers, the illumined masters, the perfected ones. Contemplate them daily morning, noon, evening and night. Keep them in your heart. Keep them ever before your vision. They are the lights that illumine our path to blessedness. Without them this world would be a dreary desert, a wilderness full of thorns, poisonous trees and venomous creatures. Without them this world would be what it is today on the outer surface. Because of them there is hidden beneath the outer exterior of this present day world of violence, hatred, conflict, clash, selfishness and immorality a radiant spiritual world, a radiant world of purity, of perfection, of goodness. There is here and now a radiant world of Divinity.

Live in that world! not in this external world which, with its strident noise, seems to demand your attention, forces itself upon your consciousness. Reject it! Get thee behind me, Satan! Refuse to recognise it, because there is a greater reality. The seen is not the real; the unseen is the real. The outer, visible one is not the real; the inner, hidden one is the real. The outer is but a pale, ineffective reflection of that which is radiantly real, eternal and unchanging. Focus upon that

truth and cross the bridge to eternity that the ideal, exemplary lives of the sages and saints constitute for humanity.

As long as human memory cherishes the sublime, noble and ideal lives of these great ones, there is a future for humanity. As long as human hearts cherish these lofty and radiant examples, we walk in the light; we do not dwell in darkness. This is the truth. This is verily the truth. This is indeed the truth.

You live where you choose to live. If you close your eyes to the light, you close to live in darkness; but if you choose to help your eyes open to the light, your heart will be flooded by light. You will walk in the light; you will live in the light. And there will be no groping, no stumbling, no wandering. There will be a sure and steady progress towards a clearly perceived ideal and goal.

In firm footsteps you can walk upon the path that is radiantly present before you, lit up and illumined by your own faith, lit up and illumined by your own vision, lit up and illumined by your own awareness that behind the seen there is the unseen, behind darkness there is light, behind the cloud there is sunshine, behind the screen there is the great beauty of beauties, the ever-present radiance, the splendour that the body-house houses. Within this body-temple there is the hidden splendour.

That is to be focused upon. That is to be held firmly in your heart. That is to be cherished in your thoughts. Man without vision perishes. Man with vision is never harmed. No harm can come to that being who lives with a vision and a goal. Na hi kalyanakrit kascid durgatim tata gacchati (The doer of good, O my son, never comes to grief). Kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati (O Arjuna, know for certain that My devotee never perishes).

These are not vain statements. They are the manifestations of truth, the utterances of eternal promises. We should recognise that we live in the Light even in a world of darkness around us. For, beyond and behind the ever-changing, the seen world of unrealities, transcending them, there is an unseen world of the eternal, unchanging Reality. We must live in this truth, in the awareness of this fact. That is the surest way of overcoming all things external, conquering all obstacles and attaining the supreme, for which we have been sent here.

We have not been sent here to go around in circles. We have not been sent here to grope in the darkness. We have not been sent here to wander and stumble and fall, to weep and wail. We have been sent here for attainment. We have been sent here for overcoming and accomplishment. And until we attain that, we should not rest upon our oars.

That is the great glory of human life. That is the grandeur of these times, times that have been endowed with more light, more wisdom, more knowledge,

more insight and more vision than any other century, than any other generation within human memory, within known human history.

This closing decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century form a glorious period in human evolution. Just as the fifteen minutes before and the fifteen minutes after the midday and midnight sandhis (junctions) are spiritual moments in time and the two hours before and half an hour after dawn comprise a charmed period, even so, the junction point between the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries has on either side a decade of supreme blessedness and auspiciousness, potent with infinite possibilities for spiritual evolution. This generation is supremely blessed, and you who are now living in this period are more blessed than you can ever imagine.

All the positive forces of radiant and resurgent spirituality are converging upon this period, filled with great blessedness, great possibilities, great potential and immense spiritual help from all the brahma vidya gurus from the most ancient times. For they are immortal. They are beyond time; they are eternally present. Brahmaveda brahmaiva bhavati (He who knows Brahman verily becomes Brahman). They are called nitya siddhas, eternally present. Dattatreya, Dakshinamurti, Vyasa and Vasishtha are one with Brahman. They are ever-present spiritual centres, spiritual forces, ever-present centres of light, and they only await our call, our turning to them. They are there as centres of grace, centres of spiritual power, force, energy.

Therefore, to recognise this great truth and to seek to make the very best use of this period, rather than to allow it to pass and later on lament, would indeed be wisdom on your part. Remember the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins in the New Testament. Remember that this is a period when God is knocking at the doors of the human heart. This is a period when God is calling: Uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata (Arise, awake, having reached the wise become enlightened).

He may call through an Aurobindo, through a Ramana Maharshi, a Ramdas or a Sivananda. He may call through a Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Rama Tirtha, Nityananda, Sai Baba or Muktananda. He may even call through Venkatesananda, Krishnananda or Chidananda. He may call through anyone. He may call through a dream. He may call through your own sudden intuition. He may even call through a passing, seemingly insignificant incident in your daily life. He has no dearth of ways of calling. He may call from the mouth of a babe. There is no end or restriction to where He may call from.

If you heed the call, then he that hath eyes, let him see; he that hath ears, let him hear. We have to develop the vision and the receptivity. We have to develop the wakefulness, the alertness to catch the call as did the wise virgins, as have all the great ones who responded to the call.

These are all truths which you have to recognise and reflect over. They are being placed before you as so many indicators of the supremely blessed period in which you are living. They are placed before you for your serious consideration and immediate recognition. Let it not be said of you that blessings were poured upon you, showered upon you, and you did not receive. Sri Anandamayi Ma used to say: There may be a downpour of rain, but if a vessel is kept with its bottom up, then it will not collect even a drop of water. Take care how you keep your vessel. You must keep it right side up.

Therefore, keep open the doors of your heart. Let it not even require to be knocked upon. Keep it open before anyone comes to knock and ask you to open. Then you are thrice blessed. Even otherwise, ask and it shall be given, knock and it shall be opened unto you, seek and thou shalt find it. But if you already keep seeking, already keep the doors of your heart open, you are indeed thrice blessed. You are indeed most wise and supremely fortunate.

That is how you should be as spiritual children of blessed Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, who was the awakener par excellence of global humanity in this twentieth century. Congratulate yourself and crown your life with glory!

Obedience Is Better Than Reverence

Worshipful homage unto the Divine Reality that is the one unchanging fact, the one unchanging, ever-present truth behind and beyond these ever-changing, transitory and temporary appearances of names and forms that make up this universal, phenomenal appearance. May divine grace flow from that Reality and awaken within you the awareness of Its presence within your own being, so that you feel yourself as what you really are, namely, a moving temple enshrining the Great Reality.

Loving adorations to beloved and worshipful Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, who taught and admonished and called upon all to lead a life of being divinely awakened even while living in this prosaic, secular world a life of God-awareness or God-consciousness. May his benedictions enable you all to come into that state of consciousness where you are aware of your divinity and strive to make your life filled with that divinity.

The ancient, illumined seers and sages of this sacred land of India have declared that your supreme goal of life, the purpose of your existence, is to attain liberation from the vexing bondage and limitation of this earth-bound and body-bound life. They have called it moksha. And to attain it they said that you have to exert, you have to be up and doing, you have to make the necessary effort.

So, they have linked that supreme attainment, by which alone your life becomes fruitful and fulfilled, to exertion. You must exert! That is their call to each and every one of you. You must exert, you must do purushartha. If exertion,

therefore, is the means, if abhyasa is the means, if sadhana is the means for attaining that supreme state, then it implies that we cannot keep quiet. As the saying goes, we must do the needful.

And what that needful is, is the content of all the scriptures and of all the teachings of the saints and sages. They describe the various means: how you can do it through your emotion, through your sentiment; how you can do it through your mind power, through your intelligence, intellect, discrimination, investigation and enquiry; how you can do it through the physical activity of your body; how you can do it through Name; how you can do it through a combination of all diverse ways. All the scriptures, the sastras, tell us the various methods. But they all say that YOU must do it. And you can attain only by EXERTION.

There is butter inside milk, but unless you put forth the necessary effort and churn it, the milk will remain milk only. The butter will never be obtained. It is only when you make the necessary exertion that the butter appears, it comes out at the top and you are able to obtain it. That is the admonition.

And at the same time that you do the needful you do purushartha, you do abhyasa you must refrain from doing that which is inimical or adverse to the success of your activity. If you want to succeed in what you do, if you want your exertion to be fruitful, you must simultaneously see that you do not do those things which will stand as an obstacle to the success of your endeavour.

You cannot treat yourself for a stomach ulcer and at the same time continue to take alcoholic liquor. You cannot treat yourself for diabetes and at the same time go on stuffing yourself with sweets. You cannot treat yourself for tuberculosis and at the same time continue to smoke. Because all these things successfully nullify whatever effort you are doing on the positive side for gaining some desired objective. They make the effort useless.

Some of your ancients who were filled with a desire for attaining supreme wisdom, to become divinely perfected beings, who wholeheartedly dedicated themselves to this quest went away to the forest, lived in seclusion, practised severe austerities, lived on leaves and water, took nothing that would be likely to stimulate their passions; if such people could have a spiritual downfall when a temptation suddenly arose, then what about those who eat all sorts of rich food, have soft beds and nice pillows with all comforts and conveniences, no austerity, no tapasya, no penance, no mortification, no self-denial, no fasting, no prayer, no vigil? then how do you expect such people calling themselves sadhakas, living lives of sense-satisfaction, desire-fulfilment, good food, comfort and convenience not to have a downfall? How can you expect such people to attain illumination?

If, in spite of what has been said, such people—well fed, well clothed, full of comfort and conveniences and luxuries attain Self-realisation, then the Himalayan mountains will float upon the Indian Ocean. That is what an ancient

Sanskrit sloka says: People like Visvamitra and Parasara sustained their penance and their prayerful life of meditation in the forest upon merely air and water and the leaves of trees. If such people had a downfall when they were tempted, do you think that people who live a life of comfort, convenience and good food will attain Self-realisation? If they attain, wonder of wonder, nothing is impossible. Everything is possible. Fire will start burning downwards. The sun will start rising in the west and setting in the east. The Ganga will start flowing towards the Himalayas and if a mountain is thrown into the ocean, it will merrily start floating away. That is what this sloka says.

Which all goes to say, that simultaneous with one's effort or exertion or purushartha or abhyasa or sadhana for the attainment of this great liberation, one should at the same time, side by side, also practice self-restraint, self-control, moderation. That is what the scriptures tell us. They speak of do's and don'ts.

Patanjali starts with that. He gives us yamas and niyamas. He says: ahimsa not hurt anyone. Brahmacharya do not indulge in gross, lower propensities. Be noble, be subtle, rise high into sattva. Satyam speak the truth. It also means do not speak falsehood. You cannot just speak the truth when it is convenient to you, and say I am fulfilling the injunctions of Patanjali's Yoga sutra. When he says speak the truth, it means truth and truth alone. It cannot be accompanied by falsehoods when they are convenient for you. You cannot play a game of being this and that.

This is the implication in Jesus saying to the fishermen: Arise, follow Me. A very simple sentence, but it is filled with a world of meaning: Arise, come, come! Stop being as you are! Put an end to this state! Change it! Be transformed! Arise! Come out of it! Now I will tell you: Be something else. Follow Me. Be as I am. Do as I am. I stand before you as an example. Walk in My footsteps. Live as I am living. Follow Me. I am teaching you how to live. Don't follow your whims and fancies. Follow Me.

Long before this significant and most meaningful incident for all humanity, long before that, another Teacher also wanted His disciple to do as He told him to, to act as He told him to act. And the disciple replied: karishye vachanam tava, Yes, I shall do Thy bidding, I shall carry out Thy word, Thy injunction. And that being in whose presence we are discussing these facts, these truths, that being is the one who said: Obedience is better than reverence.

So when Jesus says, Arise and follow Me, we must consider: Are we arising from that which we have been? Are we following? What is that righteous way that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven? It is that way which has been trodden by all the great ones of the past mahajana yena gatah sa panthah. Are you following? Are you fulfilling this injunction? Then this is the day. This then is the truth you must deeply reflect upon.

If worship is to be fruitful, if devotion is to be fruitful, if reverence is to be fruitful, if adoration and prayer is to be fruitful, it must be accompanied by obedience. It must be accompanied by carrying out the word of the Guru. Are we doing it or not?

Gurudev says: At the end of each day before you go to bed, examine yourself, introspect, think deeply, go within, search, do self-examination. He says to do this every day. Also, keep a spiritual diary, keep a self-correction register. He uses the term self-correction. Uddharet atmana atmanam. Each one must uplift oneself by one's own self. Therefore, you have to correct yourself by your own self. Someone may point out a defect to you, but that person cannot correct the defect in you. You have to make effort and correct yourself. And at the end of his Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions, Gurudev says: This is the essence of all spiritual sadhanas. This will lead you to moksha. All these niyamas or spiritual cannons must be rigidly observed. You must not give leniency to the mind.

If you do not observe Gurudev's instructions strictly and rigidly and if you find that no spiritual progress is being made, that you have no peace of mind, that the same old rubbish is there as before, then you can't blame the Ganga or the Himalayas or Rishikesh. You cannot blame this holy atmosphere of the forest laden with bilva trees. You cannot blame Lord Visvanatha or the Divine Name being chanted in the Bhajan Hall. You cannot blame the Samadhi Shrine or the Library filled with spiritual books.

Then, who is to blame? You need not blame yourself either. You must blame your disobedience. You are blameless because you are Atman aham brahmasmi. So, if you do not want to blame yourself, blame your sins of omission and commission. And then stop doing sins of commission and start correcting your sins of omission. Someone has to take the blame. Somewhere there is a cause. If walking is painful that means that the shoe is pinching or you have a thorn in your foot. Without a cause you won't have an effect. Find out!

If, in spite of all these wonderful, sublime teachings and this wonderful atmosphere, we find that we are not making spiritual progress, this much is for sure: this holy environment is not responsible for it. And no use saying that Krishna is responsible, Jesus is responsible, Chidananda is responsible. First of all look at your own life.

Arise and follow Me. Are you following the great ones? Karishye vachanam tava, O Lord I will carry out Thy word, I will do Thy bidding. Obedience is better than reverence, says Gurudev, Do real sadhana, my dear children, do real sadhana. How can you expect real peace of mind if you do not do brahma vichara? How can you expect real Santi if you do not do yoga sadhana?

So, today, my beloved sadhakas, devotees of the Lord, lovers of righteousness, satsangis, realise that success or failure is something whose

source you have to trace into your own inner being, into your own svabhava, your own nature and life and the manner in which you live your life your conduct, your character, your action your day-to-day living of your life. You will have to trace it there.

You will not find the reason for the lack of spiritual progress anywhere also in the world. You have to seek within. Ponder. Reflect. Analyse. Be humble. Be simple. Be honest with yourself. Be truthful. Be sincere. Be earnest. Be serious. Be true.

Today is the right day, the right time to tell Swami Sivanandaji: Yes, Holy Master, just as I show reverence to you, I shall also obey you, I shall actively follow your spiritual instructions and teachings. I will do all that is necessary to be done. I will avoid all that should not be done. Thus will I be a good disciple, a perfect Yogi, a true sadhaka and then I shall rejoice and rejoice and I shall rejoice!

Booklet Eight

"With perfect faith and belief, really and truly make God your all in all. Then you have nothing to fear. You are absolutely secure. No harm can befall you."

-Sri Swami Chidananda



Tie Your Raksha To The Supreme Being

Radiant Atman! Long ago, when this Ashram had only seven or eight inmates, Gurudev established a school for children Sivananda Primary School. It was inaugurated in the year 1942, and the school room was the first room in the press building, just behind where you now enter the press. Next to it was smaller room where the teacher lived. The teacher was revered Satchidananda Maithaniji, the retired manager of the Sivananda Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Works. He had about 12 to 15 students, and he was called Masterji. Many of the students are still in this area.

Occasionally Gurudev would drop in, and he would often give the students a brief four line lecture on one of the Yogas or on Divine Life. One of the lectures went: I shall now deliver a lecture on Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga is divine love. Sing like Mira. This is my lecture. Another lecture was: Insure your life with God. All other insurance companies may fail. But the Divine Insurance Company will never fail. This is my lecture.

So, insure your life with God. Insure your life, not with the LIC or any other public or private company, but insure your life with God. Companies may fail. Even banks and large industries fail; you may lose your investments. But the Divine Insurance Company will never fail.

There is a story of a Muslim fakir whose cottage was destroyed by monsoon rains. He lives near Delhi, and as the emperor Akbar was known to be a generous man, he approached him. At the time, the emperor was at prayer, and as he listened, the fakir overheard the emperor praying for all sorts of things more money, larger armies, etc. After listening for a while the fakir quietly left. The emperor, sensing that someone had been near him, had his guards call the fakir back so he could enquire as to what he wanted. After being questioned, the fakir told him: I came to ask you for something, but when I found that you yourself were asking for something from someone else, I thought that if that Being is so

great that my emperor is asking for things from Him, why should I not directly ask from that Being myself. Why not ask from the Highest rather than ask from someone who himself has to ask for things.

These thoughts occurred to me this morning because there is a tradition, a custom, which takes place all over the north, especially in Punjab, U.P., etc., where, upon this full moon day, people tie a shining contraption upon their brother's forearm. If they don't have a brother they sometimes tie it on some close friend whom they regard as an elder brother. This friend thus becomes their well-wisher, their protector, their friend in time of need. He becomes a support to them, an insurance of safety, security, protection and help. They call this shining thing, made of various patterns of silk and tinsel, raksha.

And, today is the day of Rakshabandhan. Rakshabandhan is adopting a brother as it were, depending upon someone to grant you security, protection and help, to be a support, a source of assurance that I am not alone, I am protected.

Now, it has occurred to me that instead of making a human being your source of protection, support, security and help, why not tie your raksha to the Supreme Being? As Gurudev said: Insure your life with God. The Divine Insurance Company will never fail. For is you depend upon a human individual with all his inevitable foibles and shortcomings, you may find that just when you need help, the other person may be in a condition where he himself needs help. He may need help more than you do. Such things happen. It happened to Arjuna, a person upon whom a whole army was depending. He broke down crying. At that time, if some lady, who had tied a raksha to Arjuna, went to him for help, what would she have got from him? He was a nervous wreck, in a state of collapse.

So, when you want to have one hundred per cent security, unailing, absolutely assured security and guaranteed help, support and strength, then make the Divine all this and even more. Tvam eva sarvam mama deva deva. Then you are absolutely secure. For he declares: kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati O Arjuna, know this well, My devotee never comes to grief. I will not allow him to come to grief. When He says that because He is omnipotent, His assurance is one hundred per cent absolutely certain. Therefore, the famous ending lines of a Sanskrit verse: anyatha saranam nasti tvameva saranam mama; tasmad karunyabhavena raksha raksha mahesvara; raksha raksha janardana (There is no refuge for me elsewhere; Thou art alone my refuge. Therefore, out of a sense of compassion protect, protect, O Supreme Lord; protect, protect, O Lord Janardana).

Time and again in our scriptures, in the Puranas, episode after episode proves this to be true, totally true. All other support may fail, but never the divine support. Draupadi proved it. Markandeya proved it. Savitri proved it. Many others

proved it. And it is not only in the context of Indian spiritual history. It has been proved in the lives of mystics throughout human history, in the West and in all parts of the world the unfailing hands of God.

Therefore, this should be the firm conviction in the heart of a believer, in the heart of a devotee: When I have God, what do I lack? Even if I have everything in this world, but have not God, I have nothing, I am lost, I am finished. But if I have God, even if the whole world is against me, I have everything.

Jeka rakhe sai, mar na sake koi; One who is protected by God, no one can even harm a single hair on his head. This is the experience of the great devotees and mystics, the real, dedicated devotees and mystics, who always dwelt in God and for whom God was sufficient, their all-in-all. God alone was their wealth. He alone was their support, strength, helper everything. When I have You, I have everything.

Thus, one of the psalms in the Old Testament says:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me besides still waters; he restores my soul.

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Thus the prophet tells about God's protection when he befriends a man: When I have Him, I shall not lack anything. He will make me invincible. I shall go through the valley of death fearlessly. He will support me. My enemies cannot approach me. Then man has nothing to fear. Be fearless!

These assurances are given here and there in different parts of scriptures like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas. Many thrilling episodes are there, when those who interfered with the lives of true devotees had to realise their mistake and apologise for it. Someone tried to interfere with a great devotee called Ambarisha. He was also not an ordinary man, but he had to pay for his arrogance. He had to eat humble pie and kneel before Ambarisha in order to escape the wrath of God, because he tried to interfere with the life of one who had totally surrendered himself into the hands of God.

So, this practice of Rakshabandhan or tying a raksha around someone's hand gave rise to this thought in this new direction. Is it not one hundred per cent

better to make the Supreme Being our protector, our helper, our support, our brother, our friend in need? What wiser step could one take than to make of Him what you are trying to make of a frail, imperfect human being?

So, just as Gurudev taught in his lecture to the children Insure your life with God, He is unfailing, even so, with perfect faith and belief, really and truly make God your all-in-all. Then you have nothing to fear. You are absolutely secure. No harm can befall you.

This has been the experience of many bhaktas. And what has been, is true even today, and shall always be true in the lives of firm believers and true devotees of God who do atmanivedana or atmasamarpana (self-surrender). As long as the sun, moon and stars shine in the sky, this will be a fact that can never be cancelled, never be falsified. It will be proven again and again. It is an eternal truth: one who depends upon God lacks nothing.

Therefore, if you want to have a sure, certain, unfailing and fully capable supporter, helper, well-wisher, you can depend upon Him. He will be the most unfailing, absolutely certain and totally capable helper to you, at all times, in all circumstances, amidst all difficulties and problems. For, some things may be possible for man and some things may be impossible for man, but nothing is impossible to God.

Therefore, the greatest thing you can do is to tie your Raksabandhan to your divine father, mother, brother, sister, friend, helper, supporter, well-wisher, protector, security. What could be wiser than this? Let us, therefore, be wise and rejoice and be carefree in the sure protection, the unfailing protection, the omnipotent protection of God, Who is our nearest and dearest. God bless you!

Krishna Avatara

Radiant Atman! As we move towards the auspicious and blessed day of Sri Krishna Janmashtami, we are moving towards a divine advent that was extraordinary in its nature extraordinary in the sense that there could not have been a more unimaginable set of negative factors all combining together than when the Supreme Being, Adi Narayana, was born as Bhagavan Sri Krishna. We cannot help wondering how and why such a thing could come about, that the moment of Lord Krishna's advent was a moment filled with everything undivine, everything tamasic and rajasic, everything unspiritual and asuric.

On the other hand, it is said that at the time of the advent of Lord Buddha, everything became auspicious and beautiful. Though it was not the season for flowers to bloom, suddenly flower trees were full of flowers, trees bereft of fruit became laden with fruit, lotuses bloomed in the lakes. Waters of rivers that were muddy suddenly became crystal clear, and everywhere cool breezes wafted the fragrance of the flowers. Everything auspicious, everything beautiful, satyam,

sivam, sundaram, took place. Lord Rama, too, was born in a palace wonderful, auspicious surroundings.

Lord Krishna, however, was born in a set of circumstances most undivine, most unspiritual, most negative. He was born in prison; both his father and his mother were shackled to the walls, their hands chained. Their cells were closed, cut off, barred and locked with cruel guards watching them. It was midnight in the month of Sravana. It was pitch dark; the sky was overcast and it was raining heavily. Thus everything that the Bhagavad Gita says is inauspicious night time, the dark half of the month, the sun on its southward journey were present.

Lord Krishna, thus, had everything inauspicious; but even in such a set of absolutely inauspicious circumstances, there was ultimately a glorious triumph for the Divine. All that stood in opposition, all the asuric forces that time and again most determinedly tried to put an end to this advent were overcome. And one feature here that is noteworthy is that in spite of the most dire, inauspicious, unfavourable, asuric, dark circumstances, which seemed hopeless, Devaki and Vasudeva never lost faith.

They were absolutely certain that the divine advent would overcome everything that stood against it. There was in their hearts parama sraddha; there was in their hearts great visvasa, faith and trust in the promise of the Divine. It was this that enabled them to face all opposing circumstances and never lose faith. They had absolute trust in God, which made them strive through all the difficult circumstances and to ultimately have the blessedness of being liberated directly through the hands of the Lord.

Perhaps this is an indication of how the spiritual seeker, the sadhaka, the devotee, the aspiring soul has to be rooted in firm faith no matter how adverse the circumstances, how dark the prospects may seem. For, ultimately, if you persist in absolute faith, trust and devotion, and carry out the divine injunctions to the letter, then triumph is yours. You overcome all obstacles, become free and attain bhagavat svarupa. Lord Krishna Himself came to the prison house, took away their chains and made them free. This is the specialty of Krishna Avatara extraordinary from start to finish.

May that Supreme Lord, who was born in adverse circumstances, in the dark of night under great danger and stress, who triumphed over all and came and liberated his bound parents, may this Lord shower divine grace and blessings upon you all and grant you success in your journey from darkness to Light, from unreality to Reality, from death to Immortality. This is my humble prayer. God bless you!

A Good Beginning

Loving adorations to the spiritual presence of worshipful and beloved Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji who has graciously drawn us all together in a serene, holy spiritual fellowship at this early morning hour in his sacred samadhi Shrine Hall! May this guru kripa be upon you all!

I had reason and occasion to dwell upon the plain truth that as the tangible fruit of his guru kripa, he has granted to all of us this holy Ashram in Uttarakhand which is tapo bhumi not bhogabhumi but tapo bhumi. It is a place for samyama, for tapasya and for titiksha (restraint, penance and endurance). As Mahatma Gandhi put it, it is a place for simple living and high thinking.

But much more, it is a place on the right bank of Divine Mother Ganga that provides an all-round, total facility for human unfoldment physically, mentally, intellectually, morally, ethically, spiritually where all the four Yogas are integrated. It is an Ashram offering facilities and scope for the practice of nishkama-karma-yoga, bhakti yoga, dhyana yoga, jnana yoga, japa yoga, sankirtan yoga and hatha yoga. It is a place for the study of the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma Sutras, for yama and niyama, and navavidha bhakti. It is a place for tapasya, yoga abhyasa, vairagya, vichara, viveka and for the development of shad-sampatti to support your mumukshutva. It is a place for everything good, the like of which is very difficult to find.

In such a place, if we do not utilise our time and life in the direction that this place provides for, then we do a great injustice towards Gurudev, his life-work and his kripa. And if we fail to recognise the worth and value of his kripa, great will be our regret. Scriptures take a very serious note of such a lapse.

Worse still, if in this place one behaves unspiritually, in an undivine manner, contrary to the minimum requirements of the spiritual life, then one is courting disaster, one is inviting much sorrow in the future. There is a saying: anyakshetre kritam papam, punyakshetre vinashyati; punyakshetre kritam papam, vajralepo bhavishyati (Sin committed at other places is destroyed in a holy place, but the sin committed in a holy place becomes firmly attached). That means that it cannot be taken away, shed afterwards. It is a manner of speaking, a way of stressing a point, of focussing our attention upon what should be done and what should not be done.

Time should not be wasted kalakshepo na kartavyah. It should not be wasted because time is precious. We have not come here to spend our time doing anything other than the practice of spiritual life the practice of vairagya, viveka and bhratritva (brotherhood), the practice of tolerance, mutual goodwill, and paropakara (doing good to others), the practice of Yoga, bhakti, Vedanta, Gita jnana upadesa and Upanishad udbodhana (awakening by the Upanishad). We have come here for that. This is a place meant for that.

And today of all days is a great day for making all good beginnings. It is a day dedicated to Ganesa Who removes all obstacles on the path of good undertakings. He is siddhidayaka (the bestower of success). He gives success if you work in the right direction. And, therefore, it is deemed to be a very auspicious day, a very appropriate day just like Vijaya Dasami for making good beginnings. Where shall we begin?

We shall begin by stopping all activities of thought, word and deed that are not good, all the activities of vyavahara that are not good. They say read the Vedas daily and engage in actions that have been laid down or declared in the Vedas as actions that are to be engaged in taduditam karma suanusthiyatam (we must act according to the injunctions of the Vedas) which means we must not act contrary to the injunctions of the Vedas. It is already implied in the declaration. Speak the truth means do not speak falsehood; it is implied. Practise ahimsa means do not practice himsa; it is implied. Be a vegetarian means do not eat meat or non-vegetarian food; it is implied. Be a brahmachari means do not be a vyabhichari; it is implied. Fast today means do not take food. It need not be told. It is already implied; one contains the other.

Divine, godly qualities lead you towards liberation daivi sampad vimokshaya. And if the highest goal of life is moksha, then we must not only practice daivi sampada which will help us to obtain moksha, but we must also give up all asuri sampada, because it says that asuri sampada leads to greater bondage. Therefore we must not only cultivate daivi sampada but guardedly, with alert vigilance, avoid the contrary. It is implied in it.

In his book Satsanga Lectures, Gurudev said: Today I will tell you of a simple path to God-realisation, three simple sadhanas that will grant you liberation. The first sadhana is to eradicate negative, unspiritual qualities and cultivate positive, spiritual qualities. Secondly, constantly remember God in the midst of all vyavaharic activities. And thirdly, dedicate all your activities at the Feet of God. So, the first sadhana is to eradicate negative, undivine qualities and cultivate positive, divine qualities.

Therefore, on this auspicious day of the worship of Lord Ganesa, the remover of obstacles and the bestower of success. let us begin by eradicating wrong qualities and cultivating sublime, noble, spiritual qualities and divine virtues. In his Universal Prayer Gurudev says: Fill our hearts with divine virtues. If we pray to the Lord to do this, then we must assist God by ourselves also trying to fill our heart with divine virtues. Then He will help us and make it a success.

What quality to eradicate? What divine virtue to cultivate? The great Holy Mother Saradamani Devi, the divine consort of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadev of Dakshinesvar, giving advice said: My dear child, take away doshadrishti (looking at the faults of others), take away this negative habit of

picking upon the faults of others. Life is too short; there is not enough time to remove our own faults. We have so many faults that if we will start introspecting, trying to analyse and recognise our own negative qualities, we will have a full time work to do. Even a whole lifetime will not be sufficient to get rid of all the faults that each one of us has. So, if instead of doing your own house cleaning, you start picking on the faults of others, you will remain what you are.

Perhaps it may be worse still, because if you focus on negative things, on the defects of others, trying to pick holes in their svabhava (nature) instead of focussing upon God, your ishta devata or guru charana (the feet of the Guru), then you are doing a great injustice to yourself, an injustice to God, an injustice to Gurudev and in injustice to this wonderful Ashram that he has created for you and offered to you as his parting gift, complete with all the facilities required for self-unfoldment. You ignore all this and make your vision low-down by dwelling upon the defects of others. This is a still greater blunder.

And it is also a very serious thing. God is offering you facilities for becoming divine and you are ignoring that and focussing upon things which are unnecessary for you, which waste your life and create negative samskaras within you. It will retard your spiritual progress. Your sadhana will go down the drain because it is one of the chhidras through which spirituality can go away.

That which you focus upon, that you become. If you think upon silly, negative qualities of others instead of improving yourself, you draw upon yourself negative qualities. You make your drishti alpa (vision petty) instead of making it mahat (lofty, great). It is a great blunder.

And so Holy Mother Saradamani Devi said: Better start by minding your own spiritual welfare. It is too important to be neglected by thinking of other things. Mind your highest good. Be mindful of your own supreme welfare, for which a human birth has been bestowed upon you. Do not divert your mind here and there in petty things. Life is short; time flies away. Before you know it, the time of departure will come. If you have made a mess of your life by allowing your mind to be diverted to miscellaneous, unnecessary things, then you will regret bitterly, you will weep bitterly.

Therefore, save yourself from such a fate. Be sincere and serious. Let your entire mind, heart, thought and intellect be focussed upon God and the sadhana for which you have come into this sacred Uttarkhand. Be not be a Nosey Parker, do not poke your nose into affairs that are of no concern to you or your spiritual life. Some people cannot remain without doing this and thus creating trouble. What is still worse, they have a warped sense of enjoyment and even enjoy creating trouble. It is a spiritual blunder of the first magnitude. It is a great harm that you are doing to yourself and your spiritual life, quite apart from the himsa that you may cause in the minds of other people or the agitation that you may cause in their hearts. The harm that you are doing to yourself is ten-fold.

Therefore, today, on this sacred Vinayaka Chaturthi day, why not take a cue from the blessed Holy Mother Saradamani Devi and say, O Lord, I have been made to see. Until now I did not realise that this was an obstacle, because it has become part of my own nature, svabhava. I must change this habit of mind, change my second nature and be established in my essential divine nature. Therefore, from today I will begin by not finding fault with anyone; I will not allow my mind to be diverted away from the central purpose of my human existence. I must not succumb to this old, inveterate habit of the mind. Henceforward I shall not commit this blunder. I shall not allow maya to direct my mind to anything that is not part of my spiritual evolution. O Lord, help me in this task.

Therefore, every day you must awaken yourself and be concerned with the main purpose of your life, with the central objective with which you have come here and the reason why Gurudev brought into being this sadhana kshetra, this great facility for Yoga Vedanta, for spiritual unfoldment, for the attainment of divine perfection and fulfilling the purpose of life. May Lord Ganesa help you and remove all obstacles in your way!

Preparing To Receive The Most High

Radiant Immortal Atman! We were speaking of preparing to receive the Most High. Presently the entire Ashram is engaged in a face-lifting-cleaning, scrubbing, painting in order to receive an important secular dignity. How much more, a hundred fold, a thousandfold, should be a similar housecleaning and preparation within the personality of the spiritual seeker, of the sadhaka, of the Yogi, in order to prepare for the advent of the Supreme Being, the Cosmic Spirit, the Universal Soul, paramatman, into one's own life!

What does this preparation mean? What does it imply? The preparation means and implies becoming in our own being a replica or the likeness of that Supreme Being whom we wish to receive, experience, enter into, and become established in. When a secular dignitary, a President, comes, we try to duplicate the conditions to which his high status has accustomed him. We give him the best building, make it spic and span. We change the furniture; we roll out the red carpet. We may not be able to exactly duplicate, either in scale or quality, what he has been accustomed to; nevertheless, we go out of ourselves to bring the very best we have. That is what we can do.

Similarly, the human individual soul should rise to the ultimate height it is capable of. It says: This is the best I can do, O Lord. I shall try to shine with divinity to the limit of my capacity. I shall try to make myself spiritual in every respect to the limit of my capacity. That is what the Srimad Bhagavad Gita admonishes: Eradicate asuric qualities and cultivate, develop and manifest divine qualities. Try to be as much like God as it is possible for you to be within the limits of your own capacity. Each one has a ceiling limit. And God only expects each one of us to do our ultimate best and leave it in His hands.

But if we do not try to do our ultimate best if we fail to do our ultimate best then we fail. We do not answer the requirements; we do not rise up to the expectation. We are not perfect in Yoga; we do not display karmasu kausalam (skill in action). If we do not put forth what is expected of us, what is within our capacity, then we fail to meet the requirement.

God does not expect us to become a Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeva. God does not expect us to become a Chaitanya Gauranga Mahaprabhu, a Mirabai, a Prahalada, a Dhruva, a Markandeya or a Bhagiratha. But he does expect us to try our best to approximate them within our own self, within the limits of our own capacity.

We may not become a Ramana Maharshi. But we may try to grow in the qualities that made him what he was. We may not be in a position to have the self-sacrifice of a Ravana who cut off his head and sacrificed it to Lord Siva, but we must grow in self-sacrifice and self-denial. We may not become a St. Francis of Assisi, but we may try to emulate. This is what is expected of each one of us. Having lived before us, they have left footprints on the sands of time. Therefore, try to emulate! We may not be able to duplicate them in scale and quality, but we can try to emulate.

That is the very meaning of idealism. We keep a lofty ideal and try to emulate that ideal. Try to be as non-violent as Mahatma Gandhi. Try to be as abstemious as Vinoba Bhave. Try to be as brave as Mira. Try to be as patient as others who waited and prayed, who waited long and prayed. Trying to be like an ideal we set before us is the hallmark of a sadhaka and a seeker: Lives of great men oft remind us that we can make our lives sublime.

Never lower your ideal. Even if you cannot approximate it in every way, do not lower your ideal. Say: I shall try my best, but do not lower your ideal. Do not compromise; do not dilute your spirituality.

Aim for the stars. Swami Krishnanandaji used to say: It is better to aim at a lion and miss it than to aim at a jackal and hit it, Try to become like God. Try to walk the earth like Gods. Do not dilute your spirituality. that is what idealism means trying to become as brave as Bose, trying to become as self-sacrificing as Florence Nightingale, trying to become as truthful as Harischandra.

Try to be as non-violent as Gandhi. Try to become as patient as Buddha. Try to be as compassionate as Christ. In this way, you may then become something. At least you can become the best of what you are capable of becoming. And that is not a mean achievement; that is not an ordinary thing. If you are a diamond, shine like the best diamond. If you are a ruby, shine like the best ruby. If you are an emerald, shine like the best emerald. An emerald is not expected to shine like a diamond. A ruby may not be like an emerald, but it can

be a best ruby. In the same way, be a tyagi, be a virakta, be a Yogi, be a bhakta, be a jnani, be a viveki, be a vicharasila, be a self-controlled being, be a samyami.

We expect in God peace. We expect in God harmony, where all things meet together and are balanced, where there is perfect silence. And there is great beauty in that harmony and silence. There is peace, and where there is peace there is joy. Try to be all this. Try to have a harmonious nature; try to harmonise with others. Try to harmonise with life around you; try to harmonise with conditions.

If I go on harmonising with others, if I adapt, adjust, accommodate, where will I be? I will become a cipher. That is exactly what Vedanta wants you to be. Vedanta wants you to disappear. It wants you to reduce yourself to a cipher, become a nothing. That is the highest good. Losing yourself, you gain the whole universe. You gain the All. Holding on to yourself, you lose everything he who gives up his life will attain everlasting life; he who clings to his life will enter into spiritual death.

That is the paradox of spiritual life. Those who want to cling to the life of this little, they enter into spiritual death. Those who die to the little, they inherit everlasting life. Therefore, Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said: Lesser than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree more forbearing than a tree which bears heat, cold, rain, sun, dust, grime, everything, and yet continues to give shade, flowers, fruits, itself. It bears everything and yet goes on giving of its abundance. It gives to those who tend it, and it also gives to those who take an axe to it and cut off its branches or even lay an axe to its roots. Till the very end it continues to give. Blesses are the meek, the humble in spirit, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. What you keep you lose. What you renounce, you get.

A poet has said: He who has renounced desire, who wants nothing, is an emperor of emperors. Gurudev was such an emperor of emperors. We saw in him the forbearing nature referred to by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. We saw in him the humility of something lesser than a blade of grass. We saw him literally fulfil the third quarter, amanina manadena, ever rejoicing in giving respect and reverence to others. Thus it is that one tries to approximate in spirituality, in divinity, in godly qualities, that nature which we attribute to God.

Lord Krishna washed the feet of the sages and the august guests who came to attend the rajasuya yajna of Yudhishtira. He also acted as an ordinary driver meant that at the end of the day you had to wash the horses down and cleanse their wounds. And He performed this function publicly within the gaze of thousands of army men, who may have smiled in derision, made fun of Him. He did not mind, and it was not just a passing incident. He worked as a driver of the chariot for 18 days, from sunrise to sunset.

Lord Krishna also washed the feet of His poverty-stricken boyhood schoolmate and friend whose wife had compelled him to go to Krishna: If you don't want to go for yourself, go for your starving family. He is a king, He is rich, He can give you anything that you want. Clad in rags, poor, humble, penniless, famished, he approaches the palace. When Lord Krishna hears that he has come, He rushes out to greet him. He doesn't send a servant, but He Himself receives him, takes him by the hand and offers him His own personal seat and takes a lesser seat.

How easily we tend to forget these well-known but little remembered incidents. They are of the very essence in the spiritual quest, in the spiritual life. They may not be meant for the generality of readers or devotees, but they are specially meant for sadhakas. Jesus said: Love one another even as I loved you... Greater love hath no man than he lay down his life for his friend. And He demonstrated it by giving His life. He said: Love God and love your neighbour as you love yourself. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu demonstrated such God-nature.

Overnight one does not become a God. Growing into God-nature is not a miracle; it is not a revolution. In rare, exceptional cases one in million it may be; otherwise, it is an evolutionary process, slow, steady, by day and by night, even as the petals of a flower-bud gradually unfold in the silence of the night, unfelt, unobserved, unseen by man. One grows into divinity over a period of time through patient effort, unremitting, persevering effort, through sincerity and earnestness, through longing, through deep yearning for it, through much prayer and supplication at the feet of God.

Vigilant among the heedless, wakeful among the slumbering, diligent among the indolent, ever actively striving, climbing up step by step among the lethargic and the lazy who rest by the wayside, the Yogi, the sadhaka and the devotee of God make their life fruitful in attainment. That is called sadhana. That is called spiritual life.

And yet start where you are. Harmonise with your own spiritual family amongst whom God has ordained that you must live for your evolution. The conditions that God has given you are the very best for you. He knows best; and, therefore, He has given you what is your necessity. This is a truth that has to be recognised, and it requires humility to recognise the truth God is right. I may be wrong, I may not understand, but God knows. And if He wants to change it, He knows how to. We need not be anxious that God may forget or that He may make a mistake.

Thus, make use of the conditions He has given you. Harmonise with your own environment. Harmonise and cultivate love for the beings amongst whom, in His infinite wisdom, love and justice, He has placed you. If He wanted to do something else, He has the power in Him to do it. For He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. One does not have to invite Him: Look here, I am in

a situation. Please come and take care of it! There is no coming for God. He is in the middle of the situation already. You may call out to Him, but you don't have to invite Him. he is already there.

Therefore, in every factor that constitutes your present here and now situation, start exercising loving kindness, patience, forbearance, tolerance, harmony, prayerfulness and a keen appreciation of that which you have. These are the ingredients of victory, of conquest, of overcoming, of spiritual strength. Then more shall be given. To him who hath more shall be given. For he has recognised the worth of what he has and has started to enrich himself thereby. Then God says: Yes, yes, he has understood its worth. Let Me give more. And you will be filled until you overflow.

This servant of the master does not say all these things. It has been stated. Therefore, he brings you the wisdom of the ages that belongs to you, which you have inherited as a child of the twentieth century. What is yours is being brought to you. For often we ignore, we fail to focus upon what we have. We forget, we neglect, we bypass. It needs to be restored to your life's central place once again. Therefore, that is what is being done by the will of the Lord morning after morning. You are getting what belongs to you, that which you have perhaps forgotten or have failed to recognise the value of.

Thus it is that God makes Himself and His love manifest in your life. This you must recognise. Knowledge is God's love. Trials and tribulations are God's love. Scope for evolution is God's love. Facilities for spiritual progress is God's love. Life on the bank of Ganga is God's love. Life in Sivananda Ashram is God's love. Life with the possibility of practising Yoga and Vedanta and karma yoga and meditation is God's love, His abundant love, His great love. It is His wealth also.

The chance to utter His Name is God's love. And more than anything else, spiritual fellowship with fellow sadhakas and devotees, such as you are at this moment experiencing, is God's great love. Is it ordinary to be put in the company of spiritual people, seekers, sadhakas, Yogis, devotees of the Lord, lovers of righteousness, and people with idealism and sattvic tendencies? It is heaven on earth. It is a gift of God. It is His abundant love being showered upon you.

I close by saying: He that hath ears, let him hear. He that hath eyes, let him see. Seek and you will find. God bless you all! He has already blessed you. May He bless you to recognise His blessings. May He bless you to feel the abundance of His love and blessings enveloping you from all sides. God bless you to know how richly endowed you are and enable you to recognise these endowments, to rejoice in them, and to put them to the very highest and best use!

Concluding Prayers



The Prayer Of St Francis Of Assisi

This Prayer is accepted by Swamiji almost as Guru Mantra

“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace !
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, union;

Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light, and
Where there is sadness, joy.

Oh Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.”

The Universal Prayer

By H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

O Adorable Lord of mercy and love!
Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.
Thou art Satchidananda.
Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.
Thou art the Indweller of all beings.

Grant us an understanding heart,
Equal vision, balanced mind,
Faith, devotion and wisdom.
Grant us inner spiritual strength
To resist temptations and to control the mind.
Free us from egoism, lust, greed, anger and hatred.
Fill our hearts with divine virtues.

Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us ever sing Thy glories.
Let Thy name be ever on our lips.
Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.

"The above non-sectarian prayer is most suitable for being repeated during all common gatherings. It is cosmopolitan and all-embracing. This is a beautiful universal prayer that you should repeat daily at home as well as on public occasions. This is a prayer that will unite all, spiritualise your activities and reveal the golden Secret of Divine Living."

-Sri Swami Chidananda



Om Om Om